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SCEPTICISM IN THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

A SKETCH OF SOME CONFLICTS BETWEEN MEDIEVAL AND MODERN
THOUGHT AS EXPRESSED IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY

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PREFACE

The writer of this study is conscious that it is not an exhaustive account of all phases of scepticism in the English Renaissance. The subject was new and large, and the time was limited. I hope that the constant haste in preparation is not too evident in the pages that follow.

My investigations have been aided by the loan of books from the libraries of the Universities of Chicago, Princeton and Harvard and the General Theological Seminary Library of New York. I am gratefully indebted to Professor H. S. V. Jones, who has read the second chapter in manuscript, and who has constantly borne this investigation in mind and called my attention to helpful books and articles. Professor B. H. Bode has kindly read and commented on the first chapter. I owe a heavy debt of gratitude to Professor Ernest Bernbaum. The imperfections of my work are my own, but every chapter has been strengthened by his stimulus and suggestions. I am happy to acknowledge the benefit, in every stage of my work, of his ready sympathy and always helpful criticism.

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INTRODUCTION: THE RELATION OF THIS STUDY TO CURRENT
DOCTRINES ON THE SUBJECT

I. The Misunderstanding of the Sixteenth Century in the Neo-Classical and Romantic Periods.- II. The Clearer Conception of the Renaissance in the Mid-Nineteenth Century.- III. The Failure of English Literary History to Apply this Conception Thoroughly.- IV. The Partial Application of the New Conception of the Renaissance Illustrated in the Criticism of the Metaphysical Poets.- V. The Purpose of this Study.

The student of scepticism may approach his subject in one of two ways. He may examine it critically, that is, to a certain extent dogmatically, test its methods and results, and determine how far its pretensions are justified. He would select for this purpose the supreme exponents of the sceptical temper, regardless of periods, and relate them to their times only in so far as necessary to the exposition of their doctrines. His main effort would be to evaluate their permanent contributions and to distinguish these from what was erroneous, or perhaps of some transitory value. Such a critical study of scepticism we have from Saisset. Saisset feared the scepticism in the Nineteenth century; he thought it had become too powerful and dominating by combination with the religious, philosophical, and scientific tendencies of the century; and he sought to combat it by studying its great representatives in the past, Aenesideme, Pascal, Kant; "je viens le combattre, sonder . . . le problème de l'analyse de la raison humaine, et y chercher les titres éternels du dogmatisme."¹

¹Saisset, Émile, Le Scepticisme: Aenesidème, Pascal, Kant, 2nd ed. Paris (1865).

On the other hand, he may make his study purely historical; he may describe the development of scepticism in some period and trace its influences on the imaginative, intellectual and spiritual life of the age. His evaluation then would not be absolute, but an appreciation of scepticism as a force in history. He would ask what work this acid influence performed, and how essential it was in the characteristic movements of the age. What beliefs and preconceptions did it attack? How successful was it? And what new ideas were made possible by this disintegration of the old? Such an historical study, a chapter of the natural history of the human mind, I propose to make of the sceptical tendencies in the English Renaissance.

The pertinence of this investigation is perhaps not at first apparent. Why select the Renaissance, rather than more recent periods, for the study of scepticism? Or, if one is studying the Renaissance, why should an account of the sceptical movements throw any considerable light on the period as a whole? For even the natural historian is expected to collect his specimens with some purpose, and to illuminate as large a body of data as possible by concentrating on crucial problems. To answer these questions it will be helpful, before defining more fully the objects of this study, to review the various conceptions of the period we call the "Renaissance", and see how far they justify my assumption that scepticism was a significant element in its complex intellectual and imaginative life. These conceptions, in their variety, and with their historical reasons, will assist us in judging our present theories of the period. I shall aim, therefore, to sketch the development of the current conception of the

Renaissance, show how and when this development was retarded or aided, and what has been the tendency of recent study. Finally, I shall explain the relation of my own investigation to the general problems of the history of the Renaissance culture and literature. In this review one or two excursions into cognate fields will be unavoidable, though in the main it will be confined to literary history, and in the latter part of it, attention will be focussed on one of the most interesting and vexing problems in the study of English poetry.

I.

The Misunderstanding of the Sixteenth Century in the Neo-Classical and Romantic Periods.

Two hundred years were destined to elapse before the age of Elizabeth received a generous and really philosophical comprehension. Both the neo-classicists and the romanticists held definite theories and cultivated certain tastes, which made it difficult for them to see the sixteenth century as it was. As their failures are instructive, their efforts merit some attention at the beginning of this study.

The self-gratulation of the Restoration and Eighteenth century made it impossible for readers at that time to see clearly the greatness of the Elizabethan age. Of course the towering geniuses could not be denied. But praise was ever more ready for the precursors of neo-classical "perfection" than for native genius. This condescending attitude towards the "barbarous" Sixteenth century began early in the Seventeenth. Clarendon, who in his youth had

been the friend and admirer of Ben Jonson, praised him as the reformer of the stage and of poetry.

"Ben Johnson's name," he wrote, "can never be forgotten, having by his very good learning, and the severity of his nature and manners, very much reformed the stage; and indeed the English poetry itself . . . and surely as he did exceedingly exalt the English language in eloquence, propriety, and masculine expressions, so he was the best judge of, and fittest to prescribe rules to poetry and poets, of any man,¹ who had lived with, or before him, or since . . ."

The courtier poet, Carew, in an admirable verse criticism of Donne, genuinely and intelligently appreciative even of his stylistic peculiarities, yet feels it necessary to depreciate Donne's contemporaries and assert his absolute uniqueness in terms that prophecy the coming "school of good sense."

"The Muses' garden, with pedantic weeds
O'erspread, was purged by thee; the lazy seeds
Of servile imitation thrown away,
And fresh invention planted; thou didst pay
The debts of our penurious bankrupt age . . .
But thou art gone, and thy strict laws will be
Too hard for libertines in poetry;
They will recall the goodly exiled train
Of gods and goddesses, which in thy just reign
Was banish'd nobler poems; now with these,
The silenced tales i'th' Metamorphoses,
Shall stuff their lines, and swell the windy page,
Till verse, refined by thee in this last age,
Turn ballad-rhyme, or those old idols be
Adored again with new apostacy."²

With the Restoration even these "reformers" of the poetry of "the last age" were censured for lapses, though with the implication that one might pardon them and blame the age in which they lived. Thus Dryden, in 1672, writes: "As for Ben Johnson, I am loath to name him, because he is a most judicious writer; yet he very often

¹Life of Clarendon, Oxford (1857). I, 28.

²Poems of Thomas Carew, Muses' Library. pp.100-103.

falls into there errors of language : and I once more beg the reader's pardon for accusing him of them. Only let him consider, that I live in an age where my least faults are severely censuredetc."¹ In the same strain are his comments on Donne, and even on Cowley. "I may safely say it of this present age," he wrote in 1693, "that if we are not so great wits as Donne, yet certainly we are better poets."² And in 1700 he noted the wane of Cowley's reputation, in that for lack of judgment, "though he must always be thought a great poet, he is no longer esteemed a good writer; and for ten impressions, which his works have had in so many successive years, yet at present a hundred books are scarcely purchased once a twelvemonth."³ It is unfair to Addison as a critic to quote his youthful indiscretion in his Account of the Greatest English Poets, but his lines on Spenser are a reflection of the opinion then current as to the sixteenth century:

"Old Spenser next, warmed with poetic rage,
In ancient tales amused a barbarous age;...
But now the mystic tale, that please of yore,
Can charm an understanding age no more."

But nowhere, I think, is the neo-classical depreciation of the Renaissance more striking than in the liberal Joseph Warton's Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope (Volume I, 1756).

"History," he said, "has recorded five ages of the world, in which the human mind has exerted itself in an extraordinary manner; and in which its productions in literature and the fine arts, have arrived at a perfection not equalled in other periods." These

¹Defense of the Epilogue. Essays, ed. W.P.Ker, Oxford (1900).I,167.

²Ed. cit. II, 102.

³Ed. cit. II, 258.

periods came in the reigns of Philip and Alexander; Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, Julius Caesar and Augustus; Julius II and Leo X (a period Warton distinguished only in Italy); and Louis XIV in France and King William and Queen Anne in England.¹ In a work which was designed to show that the greatest poetry written in the reign of Queen Anne must ever remain second-rate compared with the kind of poetry cultivated in the age of Elizabeth, such inconsistency can be explained only as the result of an overbearing tradition.

The significance of these passages for our purpose lies in the neo-classical belief that the Sixteenth Century was merely a continuation of the Middle Ages. But the early critics of neo-classicism, swinging towards the opposite pole in literary doctrine, did not challenge this theory of history; they built their defense on it. Their study of Spenser and Milton was stimulated by their enthusiasm over the Middle Ages.² Thus Hurd, in his Letters on Chivalry and Romance (1762), undertakes to defend the poetic availability of the Middle Ages by reference to Spenser and Milton.

"Both appear," he says, "when most inflamed, to have been more particularly rapt with the Gothic fables of chivalry.

"Spenser, tho' he had been long nourished with the spirit and substance of Homer and Virgil, chose the times of chivalry for his theme, and fairy Land for the scene of his fictions. He could have planned, no doubt, an heroic design on the exact classic model: Or, he might have trimmed between the Gothic and Classic, as his contemporary Tasso did. But the charms of fairy prevailed . . . Under this idea then

¹5th ed. London (1806). I, 180-182.

²Cf. "Though Joseph Warton was not a medievalist like Thomas, he had that appreciation of Spenser and Milton which was the chief sign and accompaniment of medieval studies in England." W. P. Ker, in Camb. Hist. of Eng. Lit. X, 271. Cf. 269.

of a Gothic, not classical poem, the Faery Queen is to be read and criticized. And on these principles, it would not be difficult to unfold its merit in another way than has hitherto been attempted . . .

"Milton, it is true, preferred the classic model to the Gothic. . . Yet we see thro' all his poetry, where his enthusiasm flames out most, a certain predilection for the legends of chivalry before the fables of Greece . . .

"I say nothing of Shakespeare. . . Yet one thing is clear, that even he is greater when he uses Gothic manners and machinery, than when he employs classical: which brings us again to the same point, that the former have, by their nature and genius, the advantage of the latter in producing the sublime."¹

But finally, Hurd declares, chivalry died out, the reason gained the ascendant over the imagination, "so that Milton, as fond as we have seen he was of the Gothic fictions, durst only admit them on the bye, and in the way of simile and illustration only," and "at length the magic of the old romances was perfectly dissolved."²

As the romantic movement throughout Europe inspired the greatest minds and gained in unanimity and profundity by their efforts, this conception of the relation between the Middle Ages and the period we call the Renaissance was developed and deepened by other larger and more philosophical conceptions. Art, literature and modes of life were regarded as the expression of the native genius of a people, as an evidence of its national vigor and individuality; they must be indigenous to be of any worth. This reverence for nationalism in culture, the reverse of which was a fear of the cosmopolitan influences of the period of the "Enlightenment" as malign, immensely stimulated the study of origins,

¹Hurd, Letters on Chivalry and Romance, ed. E. J. Morley, London (1911). pp.114-117.

²Hurd, ed. cit. pp. 152-3.

of the Middle Ages, of primitive Germanic life. The most eminent illustration of enthusiastic scholarship at the service of Romanticism full-blown is the work of the brothers Grimm in Germany.¹ But this was not all. Romanticism developed a cult of Germanic solidarity as against the cult of Classical antiquity; the modern world, because of its Germanic -- or, as it was then usually called, Gothic -- origin and basis, had attained to a greatness beyond the reach of the Greeks and Romans. In Hegel this cult became a philosophy of history, that is, an explanation of the necessary course of development, the logic of events, the final cause and ultimate significance of the history of man. Spiritual freedom, Hegel said, was the ultimate aim of history. He therefore traced the parallel development of spiritual and political freedom in the Orient, in Greece, in Rome, until, in the Germanic world, which is the modern world, "and under the inspiration of Christianity, we come to the age of full maturity, whose mission is to comprehend and carry out the truth that freedom is the birthright of all men."² This, the crowning conception of the whole Hegelian philosophy, had in its day more than a mere metaphysical vogue; for example, the distinguished historian, Heinrich Leo, although he later broke away from the spell, in his early career accepted Hegel as his "guide in religion, as in practical politics and the treatment of History."³ But to be a Romanticist one need not accept Hegel's specific inter-

¹For the influence of Romanticism on historical study in Germany see Wolf, Gustav, Einführung in das Studium der Neueren Geschichte, Berlin (1910). pp. 211-242.

²Morris, G. S., Hegel's Philosophy of the State and of History, Chicago (1892). p.136.

³Hashagen, Justus, in article on Leo, Encyc. Brit. 11th ed.

pretation of the significance of Germanic culture; every Romantic critic played variations on the same theme. And when Mme. de Staël sought to interpret the Romantic generation in Germany at the beginning of the Nineteenth century, she believed that this tenet was the most fundamental that they had in common. "Si l'on n'admet pas que le paganisme et le christianisme, le nord et le midi, l'antiquité et le moyen âge, la chevalerie et les institutions grecques et romaines, se sont partagé l'empire de la littérature, l'on ne parviendra jamais à juger sous un point de vue philosophique le goût antique et le goût moderne."¹ And herself a cosmopolitan, she expressed the Romantic fear of cosmopolitanism in literature: "La littérature des anciens est chez les modernes une littérature transplantée: la littérature romantique ou chevaleresque est chez nous indigène, et c'est notre religion et nos institutions qui l'ont fait éclore."²

II

The Clearer Conception of the Renaissance in the Mid-Nineteenth Century

Such national and racial patriotism prevented the otherwise appreciative romanticists from understanding the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For the conception of the Renaissance as a period in the history of civilization belongs to the field of comparative studies. The movement was international, it passed from one country to another, variously but profoundly influencing people after people. It seems therefore to be an interruption of

¹De l'Allemagne, 2ème édition, Paris (1813). I, 284.

²Ed. cit. I, 289. Coleridge discussed the same subject in his lectures in 1818. See his Works, N. Y. (1868). IV, 232-ff.

that national and indigenous development which the Romanticists regarded as alone truly inward and genuine; in fact the introduction of the term "Renaissance" was accompanied by a sharp differentiation and contrast between the period it designates and the Middle Ages.

It comes as a surprise to the reader of modern historical literature to learn that the term "Renaissance" as a designation for a period in the history of civilization has been current little more than half a century.¹ The Italians used the word rinascimento as early as the latter part of the Eighteenth century to indicate the revival of art and letters, but, as the form indicates, England and Germany borrowed the term from France. Beyle-Stendhal spoke of a "renaissance des arts," and Guizot and De Staël of the "renaissance des lettres." In 1838 Libri published his Histoire des sciences mathématiques en Italie depuis la Renaissance. "Da ist," says Goetz,² "so viel ich sehe, zum ersten Male das Wort in dem das ganze Zeitalter umfassenden Sinn als allgemein bekannt vorausgesetzt." But the first histories of the whole period which really popularized the modern conception of the Renaissance were Michelet's seventh volume of his Histoire de la France, which appeared in 1855 with the sub-title Renaissance, and Burckhardt's Kultur der Renaissance in Italien (1860), which, as Goetz points out, was in some points indebted to Michelet.

Michelet expounds his views in a lengthy introduction, and they are not flattering to the Middle Ages,- "l'état bizarre et monstrueux, prodigieusement artificiel, qui fut celui du Moyen-

¹In this section I am following especially an article by Walter Goetz, Mittelalter und Renaissance, Historische Zeitschrift. Vol. 98 (1907), 30-54.

²Op. cit. p. 46.

âge, n'a d'argument en sa faveur que son extrême durée, sa résistance obstinée au retour de la nature." There were living forces, mighty enough to destroy the Middle Ages, in the 13th century, in the 13th, in the 14th, and yet it was agonizing in the 15th and 16th and at last expired four centuries too late. "Ainsi dure le Moyen-âge, d'autant plus difficile à tuer qu'il est mort depuis longtemps. Pour être tué, il faut vivre."¹ Through a hundred pages of eloquent, but violent, prose, Michelet arraigns medieval civilization for its ignorance, its mechanizing of religion, its disregard for nature and the natural, its syllogizing philosophy, in short, its suppression of the individual by authority and stereotyped form. There were numerous efforts towards freedom from the Twelfth century to the Renaissance, but they proved abortive; authority closed door after door, until at last through the only neglected portal, that of art, the human spirit achieved its emancipation, and authority was never again able to capture and confine it. Thus did humanity re-discover itself, and the modern world was born. But the process was not inevitable in any sense except that in which heroism in the face of oppression is inevitable. For the Renaissance was the great effort of humanity bursting its chains. "Tout l'honneur en sera à l'âme, à la volonté héroïque."²

Of Burckhardt's well-known work, a masterpiece of historical writing and still the authority on the subject, it is unnecessary to speak at length. A portrait of an age, a psychological study of an epoch, it depicts the salient characteristics of

¹Michelet, Oeuvres Complètes, Paris (n.d). VII, 9-10.

²Michelet, ed. cit. VII, 100.

the Renaissance, but neglects its connections with the periods before and after. The chief criticism of Burckhardt's book is his somewhat artificial isolation of his period.¹ But even though he nowhere attacks the Middle Ages so vehemently as Michelet, it is clear enough that he regards them as characterized by a movement essentially the opposite to that of the Renaissance. The Renaissance was a period of individualism, of the freedom of choice in individual development which makes possible living as a form of art; and where Burckhardt finds occasion to allude to Medievalism, it is to contrast it in this respect with the Renaissance.² Burckhardt, however, is a more philosophical historian than Michelet, and has a more profound explanation of the sources of this individualism. He does not consider the revival of antiquity, the new learning, an essential in the movement of the Renaissance, although of course historically it has to be treated, inasmuch as it colored and quickened the whole process; but it is "one of the chief propositions of this book" that the narrow term, "revival of learning," does not correctly designate the essential intellectual and spiritual tendency of the age.³

Two great historians thus created, almost simultaneously, the current impression of the 15th and 16th centuries as one of the great ages of history, primarily because it was permeated by the spirit and philosophy of individualism; both conceived of the Middle Ages as a prison house of humanity; and the liberation from this Medieval spirit was for Michelet an important result, for Burckhardt

¹Goetz, op. cit. pp.48-54. Also Gebhart, Émile, La Renaissance Italienne et la Philosophie de l'Histoire, Revue des deux Mondes. Vol. 72 (1885), 342-379.

²Burckhardt, The Renaissance in Italy, London (1909). pp.129,359.

³Ed. cit. pp. 171-172.

the essence itself, of that infinitely complex movement which carried the intellect and imagination of Europe to such supreme achievement, and which we have, following them, denominated the re-birth of humanity, the Renaissance.

III

The Failure of English Literary History to Apply this Conception Thoroughly

English literary history has not been much tormented with philosophic questionings as to its nature and aim. So far as it is possible to indicate any tendency from Warton down to recent years, it has been, aside from writing chronological annals, towards emphasizing the renaissance of arts and letters after the manner of Michelet, rather than penetrating to Burckhardt's deeper interpretation. It was of course inevitable that the earliest plans of the history of English poetry, those of Pope and Gray, should recognize the grouping of poets into schools and point out the prominent foreign influences.¹ But as these projected histories were never written, one can only surmise how far they would have been anything more than annalistic descriptions of literary groups. Courthope brings the charge against Warton, that "though he saw that the Origin of Romantic Fiction and the Introduction of Learning into England were both intimately associated with the History of Poetry, he did not treat them as if they were of its essence, but discussed them separately, incidentally, in a merely archaeological temper, and

¹The plans of Pope and Gray are given by Courthope, History of English Poetry. I, Preface, vi-x.

with so little perception of their necessary relation to his subject, that he gave equal prominence to a 'Dissertation' on the Gesta Romanorum."¹ Warton's history, however, was something more than mere annals; it was a campaign document. As a historian he had to admit the fertilizing influence of Classical and Italian literature on the English; but he was always suspicious of it, he could never praise it heartily, and his critical judgment was based on a belief in the superior value of the "Gothic," the indigenous element in English literature. The "inundation of classical pedantry," he wrote, "soon infected our poetry." And "the early Italian poets disfigured, instead of adorning, their works by attempting to imitate the classics. The charms which we so much admire in Dante, do not belong to the Greeks and Romans. They are derived from another origin, and must be traced back to a different stock."² Warton, clearly enough, in spite of the antiquarian and annalistic manner of his work, expounded the Romantic philosophy of history.

But what was true of Warton has been true of English literary history in general, throughout its course. It has followed more or less faithfully, but vaguely and uncritically, the shifting conceptions of history which we have already sketched. The Romantic critics restored the Sixteenth and early Seventeenth centuries, along with the Middle Ages, to preeminence; then began the process of classification and editing, with much discussion of the "New Age" and the forces that were made to account for it: the Reformation, Revival of Learning, Discovery of America, and others;

¹Courthope, op. cit. I, xii.

²History of English Poetry, ed. Hazlitt (1871). IV, 357, 191.

finally the term "Renaissance" was introduced, and the conception of Burckhardt, with modifications, has become current. But to illustrate these changes in the large would require too much space, and they can better be indicated by a narrower study of the successive conceptions of the so-called "metaphysical" school of poetry, a study which will lead us back to the subject of scepticism in the Renaissance.

IV

The Partial Application of the New Conception of the Renaissance Illustrated in the Criticism of the Metaphysical Poets

The term "metaphysical," applied to Donne and his followers, although popularized by Johnson's Life of Cowley (1779), was used before by others. Dryden seems to have coined it, in speaking of Donne: "He affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where only nature should reign."¹ According to Spence, Pope used it, no doubt borrowing it from Dryden. D'Avenant, Pope said, was "a scholar of Donne's, and took his sententiousness and metaphysics from him." And "Cowley is a fine poet in spite of all his faults. He, as well as D'Avenant, borrowed his metaphysical turn from Donne."² Thomas Warton, in his Observations on the Faery Queen of Spenser (1754), uses the term and supports it with a theory regarding the origin of this school of poets.

¹Essays, ed. cit. II, 19.

²Spence's Anecdotes, ed. Murray, London (1820). pp. 84, 96.

"After the Faery Queen, allegory began to decline, and by degrees gave place to a species of poetry, whose images were of the metaphysical and abstracted kind. This fashion evidently took its rise from the predominant studies of the times, in which the disquisitions of school divinity, and the perplexed subtleties of philosophic disputation, became the principal pursuits of the learned."¹

Warton's theory gives the term aptness. But there is no real consistency between Johnson's use of the term and either his explanation of the nature of this kind of poetry or his theory of its origin. The "metaphysical" poets were characterized, he said, by a peculiar species of wit. True wit is that

"which is at once natural and new, that which though not obvious is, upon its first production, acknowledged to be just; . . . to wit of this kind the metaphysical poets have seldom risen . . . But wit . . . may be more rigorously and philosophically considered as a kind of discordia concors; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit, thus defined, they have more than enough . . .

"This kind of writing, which was, I believe, borrowed from Marino and his followers, had been recommended by the example of Donne, a man of very extensive and various knowledge, and by Jonson, whose manner resembled that of Donne more in the ruggedness of the lines than in the cast of his sentiments.

"When their reputation was high they had undoubtedly more imitators than time has left behind. Their immediate successors, of whom any remembrance can be said to remain, were Suckling, Waller, Denham, Cowley, Cleiveland, and Milton. Denham and Waller sought another way to fame, by improving the harmony of our numbers. Milton tried the metaphysick style only in his lines upon Hobson the Carrier. Cowley adopted it, and excelled his predecessors; having as much sentiment and more musick. Suckling neither improved versification nor abounded in conceits. The fashionable style remained chiefly with Cowley:

¹Warton, Observations on the Faery Queen of Spenser, 3rd ed., London (1807). II, 104.

Suckling could not reach it, and Milton disdained it." ¹

Gray, in his letter to Warton, gives the same source of the school, but an appropriately different name: he calls it "a third Italian school full of conceit, begun in Queen Elizabeth's time, continued under James and Charles I. by Donne, Crashaw, Cleveland, and ends perhaps in Sprat."²

Johnson's criticism has been the chief influence on succeeding scholarship and criticism down to comparatively recent times. Even so different a critic as Hazlitt praised fervently Johnson's slashing denunciation of the "conceitists."³ Coleridge read the prose and verse of Donne; the lecture on his poetry has not been preserved, but some famous verses on Donne indicate a state of perplexed appreciation.⁴ Lamb, who loved dusty old folios for their own sake, once mentioned in a letter to Coleridge "a poet, very dear to me, - the now-out-of-fashion Cowley."⁵ Nevertheless, on the whole, it must be said that the Romantic critics, fond as they were of restoring Elizabethan literature, have done little more for this group than the earlier neo-classicists. The "conceitists" are difficult to classify on their basis; and therefore, as Saintsbury says, "the Caroline age was, as far as its poetical development went, a little slurred, a little pooh-poohed, and by a very curious illustration of the extreme difficulty of

¹Lives of the Poets, ed. Birkbeck Hill, Oxford (1905). I, 20-22. In an appendix, p. 68, the editor refers to the use of the term "metaphysical" by Dryden and Pope, but says nothing of Warton.

²Courthope, op. cit. I, x.

³Hazlitt, The Comic Writers, Lecture III. ed. Waller and Glover, VIII, 49.

⁴Coleridge, Works, N. Y. (1868). IV, 286-7. Notes on Donne's prose: V 73-112.

⁵Lamb, Letters, ed. Ainger. I, 64.

maintaining literary catholicity this mishap of falling between two schools has constantly recurred to it."¹

History which ignores important phenomena will inevitably be revised. But progress is sometimes slow and erudition alone does not suffice. Thus Hallam is able to point out an error in facts in Johnson.

"This style Johnson supposes to have been derived from Marini. But Donne, its founder, as Johnson imagines, in England, wrote before Marini. It is, in fact, as we have lately observed, the style which, though Marini has earned the discreditable reputation of perverting the taste of the country by it, had been gaining ground through the latter half of the sixteenth century. It was, in a more comprehensive view, one modification of that vitiated taste which sacrificed all ease and naturalness of writing and speaking for the sake of display. The mythological erudition and Grecisms of Ronsard's school, the Euphuism of that of Lilly, the 'estilo culto' of Gongora, and even the pedantic quotations of Burton and many similar writers, both in England and on the Continent, sprang like the conceits of the Italians, and of their English imitators, from the same source, a dread of being over-looked if they paced on like their neighbours."²

In spite of the great virtue in its day of Hallam's wide reading of vernacular Renaissance literature, his defect on the critical side becomes apparent in his attribution of so large a part of it to puerility; and on the same page he says that in the poetry of Donne "it would perhaps be difficult to select three passages that we should care to read again." Masson answers this remark, without making himself, however, any very illuminating suggestion: "And yet, in reading him, one can see that the admiration of his contemporaries was not a mere pretence, and that, as his conversation was full of suggestion to men who were far better poets than himself, so

¹Saintsbury, History of Elizabethan Literature, N. Y. (1912). p.388.

²Hallam, Literature of Europe, 2nd ed., London (1843). II, 31-32.

his poetry served as an intellectual gymnastic where, as poetry, it gave but little pleasure."¹

Since Masson, criticism of Donne and his followers has become much more enlightened, and the studies of them are too numerous to be mentioned here. Among those who have called attention to Jacobean and Caroline poetry in general, mention should be made of Gosse and Saintsbury. Schelling's passing discussion² deserves praise as one of the most intelligent, keen, enthusiastically phrased criticisms of Donne, in his purely literary aspects. But recently the most important contributions to the study of Donne and his school have been by Courthope, Palmer, and Grierson; their studies have in common, very significantly, that they attempt to relate the school of Donne to the general movement of the Renaissance, in its modern conception since Burckhardt; and on account of their pertinence to the subject of scepticism they deserve quotation more at length.

Courthope first developed his theory in his Life of Pope, where he points out the superficiality and inadequacy of Hallam's facile explanation, and declares that the school of "wit" must be "the result of the operation of similar forces, religious, social, and political, and of the influence of some wide-spread literary tradition."³ What these forces were, he explains again in substantially the same manner in his later History of English Poetry: the school of "wit" is a survival of Medieval scholasticism; when

¹Masson, Life of Milton, Boston (1859). I, 377.

²Schelling, A Book of Elizabethan Lyrics, Boston (1895). Introduction, xxi-xxiii.

³Pope's Works, ed. Elwell and Courthope, London (1889). V, 52-61.

the true Renaissance at last triumphed, the school of "wit" died. In "wit" there were three essentials: paradox, hyperbole, and excess of metaphor.

"All these qualities, which flourish exuberantly in the poetry of the seventeenth century, appear germinally in the poetry of the fourteenth; it is therefore not an unfair conclusion that they belong to a single system of thought, and that their predominance in the later age signifies the efflorescence of decay.

"(1) The habit of startling the imagination with paradoxical reasoning about the order of the universe, physical and moral, which is so striking a characteristic of the metaphysical school of Donne, is, I think, the final result of the exaggerated importance attached by the schoolmen to the study of logic . . .

"(2) With the habit of reasoning paradoxically was intimately associated the habit of writing hyperbolically. The spirit of the logician penetrated not only the poetry which derived its inspiration from theology, but also that which had its source in chivalrous action and sentiment . . .

"(3) . . . the excessive use of metaphor is to be explained by the decay of allegory as a natural mode of poetical expression."¹

In another passage Courthope speaks of scholasticism as defunct by the time of Donne; in the sphere of reason the Renaissance is characterized by "a new kind of Pyrrhonism," represented by Montaigne. And "many poets, in their ideal representations of Nature, seized upon the rich materials of the old and ruined philosophy to decorate the structures which they built out of their lawless fancy. On such foundations rose the school of metaphysical wit, of which the earliest and most remarkable example is furnished in the poetry of John Donne."²

¹Courthope, Hist. of Eng. Poetry, London (1911). III, 103-117. Courthope's "large views" are always stimulating (even where they have been shown to be wrong). For instance, his short discussion of the term "Renaissance," "a phrase at once misleading and obscure," in Volume I, 158-9, is a very helpful warning to the reader of Burckhardt.

²Courthope, op. cit. III, 147-8.

Leslie Stephen, in a recent essay on Donne,¹ takes a similar view:

"In one way Donne has partly become obsolete because he belonged so completely to the dying epoch. The scholasticism in which his mind was steeped was to become hateful and then contemptible to the rising philosophy; the literature which he assimilated went to the dust-heaps; preachers condescended to drop their doctoral robes; downright commonsense came in with Tillotson and South in the next generation; and not only the learning but the congenial habit of thought became unintelligible."¹

George Herbert Palmer, however, emphasizes the modern element in the same writers; he considers the peculiar style of the "metaphysical," or as he prefers to call them, psychological, poets, peculiarly the product of their own age, its individualism, its spirit of rebellion against authority, its introspection.

"Certain general tendencies of Herbert's time," he says, "combined with the peculiarities of his own nature to bring about this new poetry. Individualism was abroad, disturbing 'the unity and married calm of states,' and sending its subtle influence into every department of English life. The rise of Puritanism was but one of its manifestations. Everywhere the Renaissance movement pressed toward a return to nature and an assertion of the rights of the individual. At its rise these tendencies were partially concealed. Its first fruits were delivery from oppressive seriousness, a general emancipation of human powers, the enrichment of daily life, beauty, splendor, scholarship, a quickened and incisive intelligence. But as it advanced, the Renaissance opened doors to all kinds of self-assertion. Each person, each desire, each opinion, became clamorous and set up for itself, regardless of all else. In its remoteness England was tardy in feeling these disintegrating influences. The splendor, too, of the Renaissance was somewhat dimmed in Italy and France before it shone on the age of Elizabeth. There it found a society exceptionally consolidated under a forceful Queen. Foreign dangers welded the nation together. It is doubtful if at any other period of its history has the English people believed, acted, enjoyed, and aspired so nearly like a single person as during the first three

¹The National Review, (1899). Vol. 34, 613.

quarters of the age of Elizabeth. She, her great ministers, and the historical plays of Shakespeare set forth its ideals of orderly government. Spenser's poem consummated its ideals of orderly beauty, as did Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity those of an orderly church. Men in those days marched together. Dissenters, either of a religious, political, or artistic sort, were few and despised.

"But change was impending. A second period of the Renaissance began, a period of introspection, where each man was prone to insist on the importance of whatever was his own. At the coming of the Stuarts this great change was prepared, and was steadily fostered by their inability to comprehend it. In science, Bacon had already questioned established authority and sent men to nature to observe for themselves. In government, the king's prerogative was speedily questioned, and Parliament became so rebellious that they were often dismissed. A revolution in poetic taste was under way. Spenser's lulling rhythms and bloodless heroes were being displaced by the jolting and passionate realism of Donne."¹

The exuberance of the Elizabethan age was therefore turned into new channels. "The soul of man took the place of the outer world, while the old delight in daring and difficult tasks appeared in this new sphere as a kind of intellectual audacity and an ardent exploration of mental enigmas. To how many strange theories did this England of the first half of the seventeenth century give rise! To exploit a new doctrine became more exciting than a voyage to the Spanish main."²

Grierson accepts Courthope's historical explanation of Donne as sound, but thinks that it leaves unexplained and undefined "the interest which Donne's poetry still has for us, not as a historical phenomenon, but as poetry." His own study³ is an attempt

¹The English Works of George Herbert, ed. Palmer, Boston (1905). I, 98-99.

²Op.cit. pp. 155-156.

³The Poems of John Donne, Oxford (1912). II, Introduction.

to understand how the various contradictory elements in Donne's nature were combined in the poetic genius. I shall quote only from Grierson's discussion of Donne's love poetry, as the best illustration of his method:

"Donne's love poetry is a very complex phenomenon, but the two dominant strains in it are just these: the strain of dialectic, subtle play of argument and wit, erudite and fantastic; and the strain of vivid realism, the record of a passion which is not ideal or conventional, neither recollected in tranquillity nor a pure product of literary fashion, but love as an actual, immediate experience in all its moods, gay and angry, scornful and rapturous with joy, touched with tenderness and darkened with sorrow -- though these last two moods, the commonest in love-poetry, are with Donne the rarest. The first of these strains comes to Donne from the Middle Ages, the dialectic of the Schools, which passed into medieval love-poetry almost from its inception; the second is the expression of the new temper of the Renaissance as Donne has assimilated it in Latin countries."

Grierson, in a comparison between Ovid and Donne, notes the deep difference which the careful reader soon discerns underneath the apparent similarity; so also with Burns and Catullus.

"Burns gets no further than the experience, Catullus than the obvious and hedonistic reflection that time is flying, the moment of pleasure short. In Donne's poem Anniversarie one feels the quickening of the brain, the vision extending its range, the passion gathering sweep with the expanding rhythms, and from the mind thus heated and inspired emerges, not a cry that time might stay its course, . . . but a clearer consciousness of the eternal significance of love, not the love that aspires after the unattainable, but the love that unites contented hearts."

Donne's poetry is thus truly "psychological," as Palmer has pointed out,¹ for it is a study of the psyche or soul of man; it may be called "metaphysical" in Dryden's rather than Johnson's sense, in that it is the product of great spiritual and intellectual effort.

¹Palmer, Formative Types in English Poetry (1918). p.103.

In Donne's religious verse there is none of the "natural love of God which overflows the pages of the great mystics," but "effort is the note which predominates -- the effort to realize the majesty of God, the heinousness of sin, the terrors of Hell, the mercy of Christ."¹ Donne's peculiar style is therefore not to be explained, after the manner of Johnson and Hallam, as a mere affectation, as the survival of outworn rhetoric; it has its sources in his inner conflicts, in his curiosity about the subjective, in the intellectual urge of his nature. To understand the "wits" of the period, we must study their problems in understanding the world.

"Donne's qualities," to quote Courthope again,² "were essentially those of his age To those who see in poetry a mirror of the national life, and who desire to amplify and enrich their own imagination by a sympathetic study of the spiritual existence of their ancestors, the work of Donne will always be profoundly interesting. No more lively or characteristic representative can be found of the thought of an age when the traditions of the ancient faith met in full encounter the forces of the new philosophy. The shock of that collision is far from having spent its effect, even in our own day; and he who examines historically the movements of imagination will find in Donne's subtle analysis and refined paradoxes much that helps to throw light on the contradictions of human nature."

It is important for the purposes of this study to note how unanimous is the conception of the Renaissance as a period of individualism, of escape from Medievalism, hence of disintegration and scepticism, and that this conception is made to explain the misunderstood poets of the school of Donne. We have therefore in this narrow section of English literary history a development analogous

¹Grierson, op. cit. p.11.

²History of English Poetry, II, 167-8.

to that which we have already noted in the general study of the Renaissance, and no doubt directly influenced by the latter. But at the same time, the contradictions are suggestive. Courthope thinks the metaphysical poets were survivals of medievalism, Palmer that they were anticipators of the modern mind, Grierson that they were both. The problem raised here can be solved only by a more thorough and better documented account of the thought of these poets, and its relation to the intellectual milieu of the Renaissance.

V

The Purpose of this Study

To summarize the results of this "history of history," -- modern scholarship has arrived at the conception of the Renaissance as a period of individualism which manifested itself on the critical side as a liberation from Medievalism and on the creative side as a sense of power which made the age one of the supreme achievements in history. In such a period of great ferment, of conflict of ideas, -- therefore truly a transition period intellectually -- we would naturally expect scepticism to play a large part, not merely as a justification of libertine ethics, or even of individualism for its own sake, but as one of the intellectual forces transforming the medieval mind into the modern. And this phase of the Renaissance in Italy and France has in the last three or four decades been quite extensively discussed.

The Italian Renaissance, which the reader of Ascham remembers as scandalously irreligious and immoral, did not produce any one writer of European significance who can be considered primarily a

representative of the sceptical spirit, except perhaps Macchiavelli. But more than in any country in Europe there was a wide and subtle diffusion, even to the very heart of the papal Curia, of a very modern spirit of unbelief and criticism; as every history of the Italian Renaissance, therefore, has had to describe it, there is the less need for a special treatise on the subject. But every student is under obligation to the scholarly volume by John Owen, written in a spirit of moralistic liberalism, especially valuable for its appreciation of the historical function of scepticism.¹

Montaigne and Pascal have long directed the attention of French students to the scepticism of the Renaissance, but only recently has their relation to the general current of Pyrrhonism been carefully studied. M. Pierre Villey, in a remarkable work which for the first time gives a full and documented mental biography of Montaigne, has described with great thoroughness the influence on him of Sextus Empiricus.² M. Fortunat Strowski has discussed in his Histoire du Sentiment Religieux en France au XVIIe Siècle, in connection with Pascal, some of the religious and moral aspects of the libertins; but, writing in the spirit of a loyal Catholic, he is not sympathetic with these more trivial and superficial manifestations of scepticism between Montaigne and Pascal.³ The spirit of incredulity in the Seventeenth century has been more impartially described by Perrens.⁴ And John Owen's volume on the

¹Owen, John, The Sceptics of the Italian Renaissance, 3rd ed. London (1908).

²Villey, Pierre, Les Sources et L'Évolution des Essais de Montaigne, 2 Vols., Paris (1908).

³Strowski, F., Pascal et son Temps, Vol. I, De Montaigne à Pascal, 4th ed., Paris (1909).

⁴Perrens, F. T., Les Libertins en France, Paris (1899).

French Renaissance is distinguished by the same sympathetic insight as his study of the Italians already referred to.¹ John M.

Robertson has succeeded in discussing, or at least naming, every noteworthy heretical thinker, from antiquity to the present, in a comprehensive work which makes little pretension to any philosophical grasp of historical movements, but which is a valuable summary and manual.² Articles and volumes which deal incidentally or partially with phases of scepticism are so numerous that obligations to them can be acknowledged only as they occur throughout the pages that follow.

But when we come to the English field, we find that the sceptical element in the thought and literature of the Renaissance has been almost entirely neglected. No consecutive account has been made of it. The materials for such a study are still scattered through many volumes.³ The suggestions of Courthope,

¹Owen, John, The Skeptics of the French Renaissance, London (1893).

²Robertson, John M., A Short History of Freethought, 2nd ed., N.Y. (1906). 2 vols.

³Einstein (Italian Renaissance in England, N.Y., 1902) discusses the "Italian danger", pp. 155-175; and the influence of Macchiavelli on English political ideas, pp. 291-307.

A. H. Upham (French Influence in English Literature, N.Y., 1908) in a chapter on Montaigne points out the indebtedness of several English writers to the Essais, but does not accord any importance to the borrowing of sceptical ideas.

Sidney Lee (French Renaissance in England, N. Y., 1910) discusses the literary aspects of Montaigne's influence, pp. 165-179; and pp. 323-328 he deals briefly with the vogue in England of Peter Ramus.

Feuillerat (John Lyly, Cambridge, 1910) has some pages on the corrupting influence of Italy, as an explanation of a passage in Euphues. These merely incidental references to scepticism are typical of the discussion of it in English literary history. But often it is ignored completely, as in E. Hershey Sneath's Philosophy in Poetry, N. Y., 1903, a volume devoted to Sir John Davies's Nosce Teipsum, with no recognition whatever of any direct connection of the poem with Renaissance currents of thought.

J. J. Jusserand (Literary History of the English People, N.Y. 1906)

Palmer and Grierson are most helpful and encouraging to the investigator who considers the subject important, but, general and undocumented, they are hardly more than suggestions. This tardiness in English studies as compared with French and Italian is to be accounted for partly by the characteristic English neglect of the history of ideas in literature, and partly by the fact that scepticism produced no Anglo-Saxon Montaigne or Pascal to draw attention to its historical importance, no notorious archbishop of Canterbury who was reputed to doubt the immortality of the soul and the authenticity of the Bible. For its existence in the more extreme forms in England the evidence is often slight and largely indirect, usually in polemics against freethought; in its milder forms it has corresponded so closely with our current manner of thought that its novelty and significance in the sixteenth century has not been noticed.

And yet, in spite of this unobtrusiveness, the spirit of scepticism was everywhere at work in the English Renaissance. It formed no school or definite tradition, for scepticism is more a state of mind than a doctrine. It is an attack on doctrine, and where, as in Greek and Roman philosophy, there persists for centuries a continuous sceptical tradition, it is because the doctrine attacked -- in this case Stoicism -- continued to lay itself open to criticism. Scepticism, the essence of which is opposition to the

usually conveys admirably the temper of whatever age he discusses, but he has neglected the scepticism of the Renaissance. To expand this list would be only to multiply the evidence of either cursory treatment or absolute neglect in English literary history of this important element in the Renaissance. But this deficiency is not more singular than some others; where can we read a connected and thorough account of such other obvious elements in the English Renaissance as Stoicism and Platonism?

dogmatic temper, is therefore as various as dogma, taking all forms, playing like a corroding flame now on this surface, now on that, multi-colored, evanescent, disappearing as soon as it succeeds.

It is with this sceptical temper as exhibited in the literature and thought of the English Renaissance that this investigation is concerned. If our assumption regarding the historical role of scepticism is correct, a connected presentation of its development and diffusion should orient us in the study of the currents of thought in English literature in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What conflicts of ideas had a determining influence on the course of the literature of that time? In what way did Medievalism still dominate the minds of men? What forms did reaction to it assume? Is the so-called Pyrrhonism of John Donne's early poetry merely a "sport" in the evolution of thought, or has it some connection with the scepticism of the age? What was the position, as regards scholasticism, of English science, of Bacon, of the Royal Society? Did scepticism have anything to do with the rise of Deism, the distinctively English school of thought which gradually conquered Europe? Was there in England any such reconciliation of scepticism and mystical piety as is familiar to us in Pascal? Finally, we should after these studies be able to state more accurately what we mean by the "modern mind" as distinguished from, and developed out of, the thought of the Renaissance. And perhaps one may hope that such a historical account of scepticism in one of the critical period of thought will even be helpful towards forming that absolute evaluation which we began by distinguishing as the prerogative of the philosopher.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DISSOLUTION OF MEDIEVALISM, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCEPTICISM IN THE RENAISSANCE

I. The Problem of Universals.- II. Dualism of Faith and Reason.- III. The Comparative Study of Religions.- IV. The Reformation.- V. Paganism: the Culture of the Libertines.- VI. The Revival of Greek Scepticism.

In one of the tales in the Decameron,¹ Boccaccio narrates of Guido Cavalcanti, the cultivated and lettered gentleman, one of the best logicians in the world, an excellent natural philosopher, but guilty of that slight tincture of independence of thought in religious matters which was then stigmatised as "Epicureanism,"² that as he walked abstractedly in the streets of Florence, the honest burghers, la gente volgare, said that his speculations were merely a search after proofs that God does not exist. The incident symbolizes the spirit of the Middle Ages with its narrow bounds, its subordination to authority, its distrust of liberal humanistic culture. And yet these medieval bourgeois of Florence were justified in fearing such troubled meditation as a sign of an uncertain groping that was then considered the most dangerous error, intellectually and spiritually. In medieval thought the possibility of knowledge was axiomatic; the human mind must be fitted to know reality, and reality must be such that it can be known. "Knowledge," says Dante, at the beginning of the Convivio, "is the distinguishing perfection of our

¹Sixth day, ninth novella.

²Dante placed Guido's father in the Inferno for the same fault. Canto x, ll. 52-72.

soul, wherein consists our distinguishing blessedness." And the chief impediment within the soul to this perfection appears "when vice hath such supremacy in her that she giveth herself to pursuing vicious delights, wherein she is deluded to such a point that for their sake she holds all things cheap."¹ Only a debased character, it was thought, could be tormented by doubt, and therefore those who were suspected of ruminating over the essentials of salvation were significantly called "Epicureans," a term which remained current in that sense from the thirteenth century to the seventeenth.

To appreciate the compelling power which this rigid and intolerant orthodoxy exercised over the medieval mind, we must remember the work Medievalism had to do after the Barbarian invasions and the Dark Ages, namely, to organize and institutionalize civilization. In the intellectual as well as political and ecclesiastical spheres, it had to restore order and authority. As organization proceeded, each authority was expected to bow to higher authority until centralization should be complete, and the world ruled by edicts of the Emperor, the Pope, and the University of Paris. In the Middle Ages, therefore, the reason could not be free; it was the handmaid to theology. It was expected to elucidate a prescribed canon, but it was denied the right to criticise this canon. Such was the Medieval ideal, inspiring a great constructive effort. But the ideal was impossible of realization, the effort required too great. Baffled humanity grew critical, sceptical, and sought its blessedness by new paths. The way to truth, which to the thinkers of the Middle Ages was broad and straight, is to the modern

¹ Temple translation. London (n.d)., pp. 1-2.

mind a labyrinth. In the words of John Donne,

"On a huge hill,
Cragged, and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will
Reach her, about must, and about must goe."¹

The greatest and most imposing work of medieval thought is the Summa Theologica of Thomas Aquinas, a systematization of religion by means of rational demonstration; the greatest achievement in philosophy of the opposite, the modern temper, is the critical philosophy of Kant, at once profoundly sceptical and profoundly believing.

I.

The Problem of Universals

The great intellectual struggle which determined the formulation of scholastic philosophy was the conflict between Nominalism and Realism. The problem involved was no barren or artificial one; it was the problem of the validity of knowledge, still debated and often in terms not far different from those of the scholastics. It had been formulated for medieval students by Porphyry,² in his Isagoge, an introduction to the Logic of Aristotle, in a short passage worth quoting:

¹Donne, John; Satire III, Poems, ed. Grierson, Oxford(1912). p.157.

²Born 232 A.D. A pupil of Longinus and Plotinus. See Erdmann, History of Philosophy. London (1898). Vol. I, 245-6. In this survey of scholasticism I am especially indebted to Erdmann, to the article by Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison in Encyc. Brit. 11th ed.; Pünjer, Bernhard, History of the Christian Philosophy of Religion, English trans. Edinburgh (1887); Webb, C.C.J., Studies in the History of Natural Theology, Oxford (1915); Rashdall, Hastings, The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages, Oxford (1895).

"Next, concerning genera and species, the question indeed whether they have a substantial existence, or whether they consist in bare intellectual concepts only, or whether if they have a substantial existence they are corporeal or incorporeal, and whether they are separable from the sensible properties of the things (or particulars of sense), or are only in those properties and subsisting about them, I shall forbear to determine. For a question of this kind is a very deep one and one that requires a longer investigation."¹

The question was, in short, whether universals exist. The Realists, influenced by the Platonic doctrine of Ideas which had filtered down to them through the Dark Ages, affirmed that universals have a real existence apart from the mind which knows them. Logically, this Realism was beset with the danger of Pantheism. For there must be a hierarchy of universals and the highest universal of all must be God; now, since no individual object was thought to exist as individual except as a universal was present in it and gave it form, i.e., makes it a member of some class, it seemed necessary to conceive of God, Being, Ens, as in some way permeating all the universe. It was with difficulty that the scholastics suppressed and obscured this pantheistic tendency implicit in Realism.²

In spite of this danger, Realism became the orthodox philosophy of the Middle Ages. In the first place, it harmonized with the great constructive dreams of Medievalism, a universal empire and a universal church.³ And more specifically, the formu-

¹Translation by Rashdall, op.cit. I, 39. Rashdall says: "The words in which this writer states, without resolving, the problem of the Scholastic philosophy, have played perhaps a more momentous part in the history of Thought than any other passage of equal length in all literature outside the Canonical Scriptures."

²A system of graded universals was worked out by Porphyry and after him called Arbor Porphyrii. Erdmann, I, 245.

³Bryce, James, Holy Roman Empire, N.Y. (1904). 97-99.

lators of theology found the doctrine of the independent existence of universals very useful for a rational interpretation of some important and puzzling Christian doctrines, especially those of the Trinity and the bodily presence of Christ in the Mass. On the other hand, Nominalism led only to a terrifying despair. Inasmuch as it denied the existence of universals, it appeared in that age to deny the possibility of any knowledge at all; it reduced the organized world of Realism to an anarchic world of mere unrelated individual phenomena. Roscellinus, who was the first to develop the philosophy of Nominalism, and who scandalized the Church by his heretical conclusions, declared, according to his bitter opponent Anselm, that "the universal substance" is only a flatum vocis, a verbal breathing.¹ As he did not hesitate to follow his tenets to their logical conclusions even in theology, he denied that we can speak of three persons in one person -- we must speak of three Gods. Naturally, he also raised difficulties over the Mass. The Church consequently condemned Nominalism, and Roscellinus was compelled to recant at the Synod of Soissons in 1092. In the next two centuries the adherents of Nominalism were few and mostly secret. Authority for the time prevailed.²

Scholasticism flourished at its height in the thirteenth century. During that period the problem of the universals in its first form had apparently been solved by the three-fold method of conceiving their existence either ante rem, in re or post rem. But it returned in a new and more subtle form as the problem of indivi-

¹Pringle-Pattison, Encyc. Brit. Vol. 24, 349.

²Pünjer, op. cit. 28-29.

duation. Aristotle had taught that matter is a universal substance which is individualized by form. But if form also be considered universal, why should any object be different from any other of its class? Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas therefore shifted their ground and taught that matter, not form, was the principle of individuation; but as this explanation did not explain, Aquinas sought to push the vexing problem out of sight by saying that "the principle of the diversity of individuals of the same species is the quantitative division of matter."¹ "To answer one doubt," said Montaigne of the scholastics, "they give me three: it is a Hydra's head."

The failure of this principle of individuation in the Thomist philosophy led to a revival of a modified and subtilized form of Nominalism, championed by the Englishman William of Occam. Again philosophy took the reality of the individual as its point of departure, and grew sceptical of the reality of the universal except as a mental concept.

"Such a doctrine," writes Pringle-Pattison, "in the stress it lays upon the singular, the object of immediate perception, is evidently inspired by a spirit differing widely even from the moderate Realism of Thomas. It is a spirit which distrusts abstractions, which makes for direct observation, for inductive research. Occam, who is still a Scholastic, gives us the Scholastic justification of the spirit which had already taken hold upon Roger Bacon, and which was to enter upon its rights in the 15th and 16th centuries. Moreover, there is no denying that the new Nominalism not only represents the love of reality and the spirit of induction, but also contains in itself the germs

¹ Pringle-Pattison, Encyc. Brit., Vol. 24, 354.

of that empiricism and sensualism so frequently associated with the former tendencies."¹

The philosophy of Occam, usually called Terminism to distinguish it from the Nominalism of Roscellinus, was feared by the Church as much as the earlier school. Occam, after a life of imprisonment and persecution, died in 1347. Already in 1339 the University of Paris, the intellectual capital of scholasticism, put his treatises under the ban, and the next year the philosophy of Nominalism was again formally condemned. But persecution and condemnation availed nothing. Followers came to Occam in crowds. As Erdmann remarks, "the Thomists and Scotists, who unite themselves against the common enemy . . . can nevertheless only prove by the fruitlessness of their struggle that the time for nominalism is come, and that therefore he who declares for it best understands his age, that is, is most philosophical."² Although opposition to it kept up, and Louis XI in 1473 issued an edict binding all the teachers at the University of Paris by oath to teach the doctrines of Realism, it

¹Pringle-Pattison, Encyc. Brit., Vol. 24, 355.

Students of Occam have not failed to point out the significance of the fact that he was a countryman of Francis Bacon and Hobbes, as well as of Roger Bacon and Duns Scotus. Thus T. M. Lindsay, British Quarterly Review, Vol. lvi (July, 1872), p.2: "He was the great English schoolman, and his nationality appears everywhere in his writings and actions, distinguishing him from the other leaders of medieval thought. . . . we see in William of Occam some of the best features of the English character . . . He was full of sturdy self-dependence, and had a strong love of freedom, which made itself felt on questions both of Church and State policy." Likewise George Croom Robertson, discussing the English mind, says: "And for certain, in this English Franciscan, still deep in the middle age, three long centuries before the day of Bacon and Hobbes, we can descry, through the veil of his scholastic jargon, a thinker mentally akin to these -- to Hobbes especially -- in a fashion of which they in the indiscriminating impatience of their opposition to the scholastic system little dreamt." Philosophical Remains, Lond. (1894). 37.

²Erdmann, I, 514.

was too late to win a philosophical victory by means of such overbearing flats, and the edict remained in force only eight years. Nominalism, however, never succeeded in dominating intellectual Europe to the extent that Realism had in the thirteenth century. The age of eclecticism and decay had come, and the debate of the two opposing schools lasted through the Renaissance. Even as late as 1651 there appeared in France a work by Salabert with the significant title, Philosophia Nominalium vindicata.

II

Dualism of Faith and Reason

We shall get a better understanding of Nominalism as a preparation for certain aspects of Renaissance thought if we go back and trace the development of a related problem: the divergence of reason and faith. When the scholastic philosophy was in the process of formation in the twelfth century, it gradually established also the theory of the identity of faith and reason as means of knowledge. Anselm demonstrated the existence of God by means of the ontological argument, that is, by assuming as axiomatic the real existence of universals. Abelard's rationalism, it is true, was the cause of his persecution by the conservatives of his day, who objected to "the whole tone, spirit and method of his theological teaching. He had presumed to endeavour to understand, to explain the mystery of the Trinity: he had dared to bring all things in Heaven and earth to the test of Reason."¹ But Abelard

¹Rashdall, op. cit. I, 55.

certainly had no heretical intention; on the contrary, he believed in the reason as the efficacious instrument of orthodoxy. That he was not afraid of debating any of the sacred doctrines is clear from his curious Sic et Non, a compilation from the Scriptures and such other writings as were then available, of arguments for and against each of 158 propositions in theology, ethics and historical Christianity, with no comment and no conclusions drawn.¹ And though Abelard was stigmatized as a heretic in his own day, his spirit of confidence in the reason as the instrument of theology, permitting it the fullest freedom of inquiry, triumphed in the next age, with Albert and Aquinas. In these two men scholasticism reached its greatness, with the unqualified belief as its basis that philosophy and theology must be identical, that reason can not possibly contradict faith, though the latter may at times appear suprarational to us in this life.

Aquinas is generally known for his Summa Theologica, a monumental system of theology and still the classic treatise in the Roman Catholic church. But his confidence in the reason in matters of religion is more easily shown from his treatise on Natural Theology, the Summa contra Gentiles.² In this work Aquinas had in mind primarily to stop the flood of new ideas coming in, along with the genuine texts of Aristotle, from Arabian philosophy. It was

¹Sic et Non, ed. Henke and Lindenkohl, Marburg (1851). Some typical propositions: 1. Quod fides humanis rationibus sit adstruenda, et contra. 4. Quod sit credendum in Deum solum, et contra. 38. Quod omnia sciat Deus, et non. 68. Quod Christus secundum carnem factus sit, et contra. 124. Quod liceat habere concubinam, et contra. 154. Quod liceat mentiri, et contra.

²Translation by Rickaby, Joseph, S.J., Of God and His Creatures, London (1905). For a full discussion see Webb, op.cit. pp.233-291.

difficult to refute the errors of these new opponents of Christianity, because, "Mohammedans and Pagans, they do not agree with us in recognizing the authority of any scripture, available for their conviction, as we can argue against the Jews from the Old Testament, and against heretics from the New. But these receive neither: hence it is necessary to have recourse to natural reason, which all are obliged to assent to. But in the things of God reason is often at a loss."¹ At first sight indeed reason unaided does not seem to go far; it can prove the existence of God as First Cause and intelligent orderer of the universe. Revelation alone can teach us the mysteries of Christianity, such as the Trinity, original sin, the sacraments, the resurrection, final judgment, heaven and hell. Reason can only refute the arguments of the opponents of these revealed truths. But it is important to note here that the principle of natural theology is laid down so definitely by the classic philosopher of the Middle Ages; for this principle was constantly relied on to refute unbelievers down through the Renaissance, until it reached its most elaborate and independent development in Deism.

This circumscribed area allotted to Natural Theology is, however, no index to the extent of the rationalism of Aquinas. For to him God, the world, the tenets of Christianity, all were intelligible absolutely, even though our imperfect means of knowledge prevent our knowing them in this life. "The prime author and mover of the universe is intelligence," he says. "Therefore the last end of the universe must be the good of the intelligence, and that is

¹Trans. Rickaby, ed. cit. p.2. Book I, Chap. ii.

truth. Truth then must be the final end of the whole universe."¹ However, for various practical reasons few people are qualified to pursue knowledge and thus achieve their blessedness (Book I, Chap. iv); therefore they have to accept on faith so much of it as is necessary to salvation. But to say that the natural dictates of reason are contrary to faith, is to accuse God of having given us two contradictory principles, an obviously absurd proposition (Book I, Chap. vii). Reason is dependable so far as it can go. We can not know the essence of God, because "the human understanding cannot go so far of its natural power to grasp His substance, since under the conditions of the present life the knowledge of our understanding commences with sense; and therefore objects beyond sense cannot be grasped by human understanding except so far as knowledge is gathered of them through the senses (Book I, Chap.iii)." But although what we now accept on faith cannot give us perfect blessedness, when we shall see God we shall have knowledge itself; for happiness consists in the perfect activity of the human intellect, and the end of all "Subsistent intelligences" is to know God (Book III, Chaps. i-lxiii).

For Aquinas then, reason and faith are not contradictory, and in their absolute aspect they must be identical. But this harmony was immediately denied by John Duns Scotus (1274?-1308), the first great critic and opponent of Aquinas. Duns Scotus did not on the whole regard the reason as such a valuable aid in expounding matters of faith, and set aside more doctrines as indemonstrable by reason. But more than that, God was not, accord-

¹Trans. Rickaby, p. 1. Book I, Chap. i.

ing to Scotus, absolute intelligence, but absolute will. The good is good merely because God wills it. As there is no science which can explain the inexplicable, the world is thus reduced to an indeterminism with no rational principle. Though the full sceptical conclusion of such a philosophy was not clear to the Scotists, it is easy to see in retrospect the deep cleavage developing between reason and faith as we recede farther and farther from Aquinas. In the Nominalism of Occam, which we have already discussed as evidence of the decay of scholasticism, the distinction between reason and faith is made absolute. For Occam, by denying the philosophical value of universals, denied that God could be known, and thereby rejected the basis of Natural Theology; all knowledge of God, even of his existence, and all the truths of religion and ethics, had to be accepted on faith. This position is especially clear in Occam's celebrated Centilogium theologicum, which is thus described by Erdmann:

"By far the greater part of the hundred conclusions, of which his Centilogium consists, show either that all proofs for the principal dogmas, the existence of God, His unity, etc., are uncertain, or that the most important doctrines, such as the Trinity, Creation, Incarnation, the sacramental presence of the body of Christ, lead to results which contradict the recognized axioms of reason: namely, that nothing can at the same time exist and not exist, that nothing can exist before itself, that a conclusion drawn from sound premises must be correct, that a part is smaller than the whole, that two bodies cannot occupy the same place at the same time, etc. We are the less justified in seeing irony in this, as Rettberg and von Baur do, or scepticism, as is done by others, since in that case it would at least remain a question whether the irony were not levelled at the reason . . . That a thing may be true for the theologian, but false for the philosopher, an opinion expressed by Duns only in passing, William is firmly convinced, and he is nevertheless,

while holding this dualism, an upright Aristotelian and a believing Catholic."¹

Thus in the philosophy of Occam converge the two great disruptive tendencies of Scholastic philosophy: the denial of the validity of universals, and the dualism between faith and reason. A glance forward into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries will enable us to show that these tendencies were present in the Renaissance.²

¹Erdmann, I, 511-2.- This distinction between theological and philosophical truth had already in the thirteenth century been introduced into European thought by the philosophy of Averroes. In 1277 a large number of heretical doctrines taught at the University of Paris were formally condemned, including many Averroistic propositions which asserted the distinction discussed here: *Anima separata non est alterabilis secundum philosophiam, licet secundum fidem alteretur.*- *Quod naturalis philosophus simpliciter debet negare mundi novitatem, quia nititur causis et rationibus naturalibus: fidelis autem potest negare mundi aeternitatem, quia nititur causis supernaturalibus.*- *Quod creatio non est possibilis, quamvis contrarium sit tenendum secundum fidem.*- *Quod resurrectio futura non debet credi a philosopho, quia impossibilis est investigari per rationem. Error, quia philosophus debet captivare intellectum in obsequium fidei.*- Renan, Averroès et l'Averroïsme. pp.273-5. Cf. DeWulf, Histoire de la Philosophie Médiévale, Paris (1912).pp.469-470.

²Rashdall seems to take exception to the interpretation of Nominalism as a progress of the human mind. "This association," he says, (op. cit. I, 539-540) "of the rise and fall of Nominalism with the rise and fall of intellectual activity, may be supposed to lend some colour to the theory put forward by the late Mr. Pattison as to the intrinsic connexion between Nominalism and intellectual progress on the one hand and between Realism and religious or political reaction on the other. But if in the annals of medieval Paris the prevalence of Nominalism may to some extent be taken as an index of intellectual vitality, that is simply because opposition to an established Philosophy, whatever be its character, is a sign of intellectual vigour; but the heresy tends to lose its vitality as soon as it becomes an orthodoxy. At Prague we shall find an established Nominalism associated with the narrowest and most intolerant ecclesiasticism, while Realism . . . was certainly the creed of some of the ablest men and the most fearless reformers that ever made their appearance in a medieval University. Ockham no doubt possesses an importance in the history of Philosophy which cannot be accorded to John Hus or even to his master Wycliffe, but this importance does not extend to the nominalist opponents of Wycliffe at Oxford or the nominalist burners of Hus at Constance."

Rashdall gives no clue as to the identity of "the late Mr. Pattison," and I have searched in vain in the works of Mark Pattison

The chief value of Nominalism was undoubtedly that it prepared a receptive audience for the non-Aristotelian philosophers of the Renaissance; its triumph signified the exhaustion of the constructive effort of Realism. But if scholasticism ceased as a creative force in the fifteenth century, it continued tenaciously to control theology and philosophical speculation touching religious matters. One has only to note the prompt, frequent, and voluminous printings of the medieval philosophers to realize that the printing press of the Renaissance was not devoted exclusively to spreading classical learning, and that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were still debating the problems raised by the thirteenth and fourteenth.

This extension of the Middle Ages into the Renaissance will be frequently evident in this study. For the present two illustrations must suffice. Petrus Pomponatius (1462-1525), a teacher of philosophy at Bologna, whose writings implied a doubt as to the immortality of the soul and denied the freedom of the will, was accused of heresy. He defended himself by an appeal to

for the opinion referred to. Andrew Seth Pringle-Pattison is still living.

As to the nature of Nominalism, Rashdall seems to have pointed out only exceptions to the rule; and the champions of Nominalism do not primarily claim for it "intellectual vitality" or "vigour"; reaction, it is well known, may be as vigorous as revolution. But Nominalism, they claim, means intellectual freedom with all its accompanying advantages. Thus Haureau, a fervent partisan of the French Revolution, in his Histoire de la philosophie scolastique (2 vols. 1850; revised, 1872-80.) was led by his political faith to regard Realism as error itself, a philosophy born to serve not to command; Nominalism as the temperate, sensible search for truth, the true modern philosophy, approaching in spirit to Bacon, Descartes, Leibnitz, Kant. For Haureau, Nominalism is intimately bound up with the modern mind in politics as well as in philosophy. See Picavet, F., Esquisse d'une Histoire Générale et Comparée des Philosophies Médiévales, Paris (1905). pp. 319-325.

the principle, "I believe as a Christian what I cannot believe as a philosopher." Reason, he said, is two-fold: intellectual and practical; philosophy, dealing only with natural truths, rests on the former; theology, concerned only with life and morals, on the latter. But the Lateran Council of the 19th of December 1512 condemned the theory of "double truth" in words that recall Thomas Aquinas: "As what is true can never contradict what is true, we determine that every proposition which is contrary to the truth of the revealed faith is entirely false."¹

Pomponatius and his "double truth" became a byword and a scandal throughout the Renaissance. And yet there was a whole school of orthodox Christians who made as sharp a distinction as he did between philosophy and theology. But they made this distinction, not as Pomponatius, to emancipate philosophy from the shackles of theology, but in the interests of a less rationalistic religious experience. Thus, to go back to Occam's immediate followers, Peter D'Ailly (1350-1425) and John Gerson (1363-1429), both Chancellors of the University of Paris, went beyond Occam both in their scepticism and their emphasis on faith. Gerson especially, is known as a mystic. We shall frequently observe that mysticism flourishes best outside of the bounds of dogma; the spirit of rationalism dispels the ecstatic vision. It was the perception of this antagonism between faith and reason that made the poet Cowley identify the tree in the garden of Eden, whose forbidden fruit brought all our woe, with the Arbor Porphyrii, which bore the fruit of Realism:

¹Pünjer, op. cit. pp. 50-52.

That right Porphyrion Tree which did true Logick shew,
 Each Leaf did learned Notions give,
 And th'Apples were Demonstrative . . .
 The onely Science Man by this did get,
 Was but to know he nothing Knew . . .¹

In this railing "against the dogmatists" Cowley shows not a trace of Sextus Empiricus, the ancient sceptic whose work was so influential in the Renaissance; the seventeenth century poet is a belated Nominalist.

III

The Comparative Study of Religions

With the failure of the great scholastic effort to nationalize Christianity thus signalized by the development of the sceptical Nominalism which tended towards mysticism, the approach of a new kind of philosophy was announced by the gradual development already in the Middle Ages of the comparative study of religions. Scholasticism had labored within the boundaries of accepted Christian dogma; but at the same time a new problem arose of accommodation to other religions. For Europe acquired in the thirteenth century a new respect for the Mohammedans and their religion, partly owing to contact with them during the Crusades, and partly to the fact that it was discovered that the Arabs were in possession of the great treasures of ancient learning, especially the true Aristotle. The

¹Cowley, Abraham, The Tree of Knowledge, Poems, ed. Waller, Cambridge (1905). p. 45.

non-Christian religions ceased to appear so Satanic, and discussion of them grew at the same time better informed and more tolerant. Treatises on them became common, cast in the dialogue form, each religion being championed by an adherent. The intention of the earlier authors was of course that in this debate Christianity should emerge triumphant; but in the sixteenth century the dialogue became a useful device for presenting in a veiled form such criticism of Christianity as might otherwise bring the author to the stake.

These dialogues begin very early. Gilbert Crispin, Abbot of Westminster, disciple of Anselm, wrote two; one between a Christian and a Jew, and another between a Christian and a philosopher. In the latter the Christian fails to convert the philosopher, who "rose and departed I know not whither, downcast alike in mind and in countenance."¹ Abelard combined these two situations in his Dialogue between a Christian, a Jew, and a Philosopher. He represents himself as dreaming that these three men, in various ways the worshippers of one God, ask him to judge between them. The philosopher presents a religion based on Natural Law, and declares that custom and education are largely responsible for the hold Judaism and Christianity have on their people. The Jew maintains that the Philosopher is unable to disprove the divine origin of the Jewish faith; and the Christian defends his own beliefs chiefly on the basis of the superiority of Christ's ethical teaching. All three participants proceed on the assumption that all religious doctrine, if not absolutely demonstrable, is at least

¹Webb, op. cit. pp.194-198.

accessible to the reason, and the spirit throughout is amicable and fair.¹

Both Crispin and Abelard were orthodox, at least in intention. But as I have suggested, the dialogues of the sixteenth century were by no means uniformly favorable to Christianity. In the interval between Abelard and his sceptical successors, we can trace with accuracy the spread of the notion of the equality of Christianity, Judaism, and Mohammedanism, in the successive versions of the widely circulated story of the three rings, used again by Lessing in Nathan der Weise.² In its earlier versions the tale is clearly Christian. The three chief religions were compared to three rings given by a father to his three sons, so that after his death the true heir might be identified by the genuine one. Although they are alike in appearance, the true ring is discovered by its healing power. In this form the story is told by Stephen of Bourbon (died about 1261),³ by the unknown author of an old French poem about twenty five years later,⁴ and found its way into the Gesta Romanorum, in which the application is made as follows: "My beloved, the Knight is Christ; the three sons are the Jews, Saracens, and Christians; the most valuable ring is faith, which is the property only of the younger: that is, of the Christians."⁵

¹Webb, pp.207-232; and Punjer, pp. 38-9.

²Best brief discussion, with bibliography, in Lee, A. C. The Decameron: Its Sources and Analogues, London (1909). pp. 6-13.

³Paris, Gaston, Poésie du moyen âge. Lectures et Leçons, 2me série, 2nd ed. Paris (1903). p.141.

⁴Li dis dou vrai aniel, ed. Tobler, Leipzig (1871).

⁵Lee, op. cit. p.8.

Early in the fourteenth century the story was included in the Italian compilation, Le Cento Novelle Antiche,¹ but with a new framework and a new conclusion. It is there told by a wealthy Jew, who is asked by a grasping sultan the embarrassing question, What is the true religion? Whichever way he answers, he will give the sultan a pretext for confiscating his wealth. The Jew shrewdly replies with this story of a father who gave each of his sons a ring, two of which were imitations of the original genuine one. This non-Christian framework betrays the Oriental influence which has now taken possession of the story;² the conclusion is no longer Christian; the rings are indistinguishable, and only the father could ever tell the original from the imitations.

This version is by some scholars believed to be the source of Boccaccio's famous tale in the Decameron. But others point out that a fuller version exists in Busone da Gubbio's Avventuroso Ciciliano, and still others think that the story was so widely current in this sceptical form that Boccaccio was indebted to an oral tradition, which perhaps had in it elements of Rabbinical origin.³ In the conclusion of Boccaccio's story we have even more clearly and emphatically stated the tolerant notion that there is some truth in all three religions, and that the pretensions of each to be alone genuine can not be substantiated. "E così vi dico, signor mio, delle tre Leggi alli tre popoli date da

¹No. 73 in the edition in Bibliotheca Romanica, Strassburg (n.d.).

²On the influence of Arabian culture on this idea of comparative religion, see Renan, Averroës et l'Averroïsme, pp. 278-ff.

³Burckhardt, p.493. Lee, pp.11-12.

Dio Padre, delle quali la quistion proponeste: ciascuno la sua eredità, la sua vera Legge, et i suoi commandamenti si crede avere a fare; ma chi se l'abbia, come degli anelli, ancora ne pende la quistione."¹

But the comparative study of religions may equally well emphasize the falsity as the truth of all religions, and for the existence in the late Middle Ages of this more sceptical tendency, we have evidence in the notorious De Tribus Impostoribus, said to have had its origin at the court of Frederick II, the most cosmopolitan in Europe; by one tradition the book is ascribed to the monarch himself. The three impostors were of course Jesus, Mohammed and Moses, the founders of the three religions. This peculiar treatise was mysteriously referred to as a scandal from the thirteenth century on through the Renaissance; in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries there was a protracted debate as to whether the book had ever existed. One printed copy, however, dated 1598, has been discovered, but the volume had its chief influence as a legend. The title was everywhere known and almost proverbial, and the scoffing spirit which it represented had an underground circulation in the Renaissance, the extent of which we can now form no definite notion.²

¹Boccaccio, Il Decameron, Giornata prima, novella terza. Milano (1883). p.70.

²De Tribus Impostoribus, ed. Brunet, G., Paris (1861). See account in Realencyclopädie für prot. Theologie und Kirche, 3rd ed. Leipzig (1901). IX, 72-ff.— A typical Renaissance allusion to this work by two English writers, neither of whom probably had seen it, occurs in the literary quarrel between Harvey and Nashe. As Nashe was known as the "English Aretine," Harvey deals him a back-hand blow by accusing Aretine of the authorship of this "most detestable Black-booke". A New Letter of Notable Contents (1593). Harvey's Works,

The way was therefore well prepared for the sixteenth century practice of using the dialogue as an instrument of criticism of Christianity, under the guise of a defense. Only a few of the more celebrated of these treatises can be enumerated here. Servetus, in De Trinitatis Dialogi (1532), and Bernardino Ochino, in Dialogue de la Trinité (1563), attacked the doctrine of the Trinity; Cardanus inserted a fragment of a dialogue in his De subtilitate (1552), generally regarded as a dangerous book. Jean Bodin, in his Colloquium Heptaplomeres, presents a clash of seven religious and philosophical sects.¹ Such dialogues, with their incisive criticism and their ridicule, must have given many a student a shock of disillusion which might lead him to a complete, but secret, agnosticism or atheism. But it is a mistake to attribute this intention to them. What they really attempted was to rid religion of its superstition and establish it on a firmer and surer foundation than revelation, by an appeal to the God-given instincts of mankind, to the Law of Nature, the Consensus gentium.² The connection of this current of ideas with the rise of Deism will be discussed in a future chapter on Lord Herbert of Cherbury.

ed. Grosart. I, 290.- Nashe replied in The Unfortunate Traveller (1594) by transferring the accusation to "one of Machiuels followers and disciples." Works, ed. McKerrow, London (1904). II, 265. The names of all those accused of the authorship of this book would make a long list.

¹ v. Bezold, F., Jean Bodins Colloquium Heptaplomeres und der Atheismus des 16. Jahrhunderts. Historische Zeitschrift. Vol. 113 (1914), 260-315; and 114 (1915), 237-301.

² This proposition is laid down even in the extant version of De Tribus Impostoribus: "Religionem et cultum Dei secundum dictamen luminis naturalis consentaneum et veritati et aequitati esse." Ed. Brunet, p. 12. Quoted by Owen, Skeptics of the Italian Renaissance, p. 30, n. 1.

IV

The Reformation

Like the other movements of emancipation of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Reformation had its secret origins deep in the Middle Ages. The great institutionalizing effort of Medievalism, its dream of world organization and authority in the realms of government, religion and education, met with inevitable failure, almost from the very beginning. We have already seen how the philosophical basis of Medievalism, immediately after Aquinas had constructed on it his supposedly impregnable fortress, crumbled under the attacks of Duns Scotus and William of Occam. While it would be an exaggeration to say that these doughty British insurgents "anticipated" the Reformation, still their effective criticism of universalism made possible -- even necessary -- an individualism in religious matters which first manifested itself in emphasis on mystical piety within the Catholic church, and later in a denial of the right of the church to mediate between the believing soul and God. The essential and fundamental principle of the Reformation, as of the Renaissance as a whole, was individualism; and the acrimoniousness of the debates over doctrine and practice is explained by this purpose of the Reformation spirit, not merely to cleanse the Catholic church, but to destroy it.¹

¹Cf. Beard, Charles, The Reformation. Hibbert Lectures, 1883. 5th ed. London (1907). p. 2: "The Reformation, in the view which I shall take of it, was not, primarily, a theological, a religious, an ecclesiastical movement at all. It was part of a general awakening of the human intellect, which had already begun in the fourteenth century, and which the revival of classical learning and the invention of the art of printing urged on with accelerating rapidity in the fifteenth." It was the life of the Renaissance infused into religion. . . . etc.

Here a qualification is necessary. Though the Reformation rejected the authority of the church to determine what is truth, it affirmed with equal emphasis the principle that there is one truth, a principle which readmits somewhere the principle of authority. The Reformers did not at once seek emancipation from dogmatism, but merely the liberty of each individual of formulating his own dogma and maintaining it against contenders. In practice this position led to innumerable sects and endless disputation, and very soon to a hard and illiberal temper and a rigid formulation of doctrines for polemical reasons, which has sometimes been called "Protestant scholasticism." A new tyranny then controlled the consciences and intelligence within each sect; Calvin became the "Pope of Geneva"; alliances of these new sects with various political powers made possible a Protestant persecution, as rigorous in some cases as the Catholic. Yet in spite of these counter-currents within the Reformation, it must be set down as on the whole an emancipatory movement, both in principle and in its far-reaching results. As this is the commonly held conception of the Reformation, no discussion is necessary to enforce it. But in order to connect the Reformation more precisely with the sceptical movement of the Renaissance, I shall point out two ways in which it directly and immediately stimulated greater freedom of thought.

In the first place, in the multitude of new sects there was room for all shades of opinion, from English episcopacy with an almost Roman Catholic spirit, to vague forms of Unitarianism. The most influential of the more liberal sects was Socinianism, which from Poland spread into Germany, Holland and England. Its founder, Lelio Socinus (1525-1562), was one of a number of brilliant Italians

who had to emigrate during the sixteenth century to escape persecution and perhaps death, and who were all distinguished for their incisive criticism of the leading doctrines of Christianity, especially the Trinity and the deity of Christ. This sect died out in the seventeenth century, but though its life was short, says Pünjer, "so much the more widely did the decomposing influence of their cold intellectual criticism extend. And Socinianism thus became one of the most essential preparations for the enlightenment of the deistic rationalism."¹ Other sects of less intellectual and more pietistic cast, such as the Anabaptists and Family of Love, were less likely to indulge in destructive criticism, but even they rejected freely some of the essential Christian tenets. There was a saying that a Socinian was a learned Anabaptist. How audacious some of these individualists in religion could be, is shown by the doctrines of certain Anabaptists in London, who asserted before a commission of bishops in 1549 that

"a man regenerate could not sin; that though the outward man sinned, the inward man sinned not; that there was no Trinity of Persons; that Christ was only a holy prophet and not at all God; that all we had by Christ was that he taught us the way to heaven; that he took no flesh of the Virgin; and that the baptism of infants was not profitable."²

Though they nowhere became numerous, such dangerous sects were constantly springing up and causing grave concern to Protestant leaders both in church and state; persecution could not eradicate them, and they deserve grateful recognition from posterity, at least for their share in the victory of the principle of tolerance

¹Pünjer, ed. cit. p.207.

²Quoted by Conybeare, F. C., article on Anabaptists, Encyc. Brit. 11th ed. I, 905.

in the seventeenth century.

In the second place, these religious schisms and controversies had the effect of making men sceptical about all religion. Montaigne tells us how his father foresaw that the result of Lutheranism would be atheism; for the criticism of a few doctrines would lead to a general questioning of all, even those essential to salvation.¹ Catholics were constantly warning against this danger in Protestantism, and there is abundant evidence that they did not do so merely from prejudice. Hooker, speaking of atheists, says that "with our contentions their irreligious humour also is much strengthened. Nothing pleaseth them better than these manifold oppositions upon the matter of religion. . . because by this hot pursuit of lower controversies among men professing religion, and agreeing in the principal foundations thereof, they conceive hope that about the higher principles themselves time will cause altercation to grow."² Likewise the Huguenot leader, La Noue, complains that the civil wars waged by the religious factions of France produced a class of light-minded atheists, Libertines, and Epicureans numbering, he thinks, at least a million.³ "Si on demande," he says, "qui a produit une telle generation, on ne respondra pas mal, que ce sont nos guerres pour la Religion, qui nous ont fait oublier la Religion."⁴

¹ Montaigne, Essays, Book II, Chap. xii.

² Hooker, R., Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Bk. V, ii, 2.

³ La Noue, Discours Politiques et Militaires, Basle (1587). p.34. See also the 24th Discourse, pp. 492-525.

⁴ La Noue, p. 5.

V

Paganism: the Culture of the Libertines

As we have seen, the desire for perfection in human nature took in the Middle Ages the form of a desire for knowledge; in the knowledge of God the men of that time sought their blessedness. Such an aspiration could of course find place only for the rational and universal elements of human nature; the non-rational, the individual elements, the quiddam suum ac proprium, were obstacles in the way of happiness. The imagination, the senses, and the instincts were the enemies of the soul -- the "flesh" in league with the devil. Medieval religious life, in short, was ascetic. And to make our account of the emancipation from medievalism complete, we must point out how a new cult of humanity was substituted, through the influence of classical literature, for the asceticism of the Middle Ages. It is true that a certain amount of individualism was stimulated in the imaginative life of the Reformation by the mysticism which we have noted as a significant development at the conclusion of the Middle Ages.¹ But the Reformation was too narrow, too preoccupied with theology, to produce any culture that would by contrast show the defects of Medievalism. This task was accomplished by the Renaissance passion for classical letters and the consequent diffusion of paganism. In this restoration of pagan poetry and ideals of life, Italy was the first among modern nations and Petrarch the "first modern man."

¹Luther, for instance, thought the medieval Theologia Germanica, next to the Bible and Augustine, the most valuable book he had read. See Theologia Germanica, trans. Winkworth, Susanna. London (1913). Introduction, xxi.

When Boccaccio was in his fifty-first year a certain Peter of Sienna, a holy man, sent a prophetic message from his death-bed to the famous man of letters, that few years of his life remained to him, and that on pain of his eternal damnation he must renounce the study of poetry. This warning voice of the ascetic Middle Ages troubled Boccaccio, and he confided his fears to Petrarch. But Petrarch, after serious and respectful consideration, replied as a humanist: "To desert our studies shows want of self-confidence rather than wisdom, for letters do not hinder but aid the properly constituted mind which possesses them; they facilitate our life, they do not retard it."¹ Only weak stomachs, he goes on to say, have to be so careful about their diet. We who are strong may cultivate pagan literature, not only with impunity, but to our great advantage.

Petrarch decided in favor of poetry. But perhaps he would have hesitated more had he foreseen all the developments of the study of antiquity. The cult of poetry which he defended was the cult of humanity: Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto. But the formula is a wide one and capable of many interpretations. And the cult of humanity soon degenerated from the fine idealism such as Seneca's gaudium res severa est to a refined but facile epicureanism which appealed to "Nature" for a justification of its excesses. Italy, where this paganism in life and conduct first developed, became notorious for it. Lorenzo Valla (1406-1457) even sought in his dialogue De Voluptate to interpret Christian blessedness as a form of voluptas, refined and elevated to be sure, and the "mother

¹Robinson, J. H., and Rolfe, H. W., Petrarch, N. Y. (1907). p.392.

of virtues." But this philosophy of pleasure was inconsistent with Christianity, and usually found lodgment in those Renaissance minds which were predisposed to be sceptical or indifferent towards religion; it was more easily combined with the atomistic materialism of Lucretius, whose De Rerum Natura became the most popular classical volume among the Libertines. This paganism in thought and feeling, this epicureanism, intellectual and aesthetic as well as sensual, was the contribution of ancient letters to the Italian Renaissance, and, combined with cynicism and indifference with regard to moral and religious matters, it pervades the vernacular Italian literature of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹

Paganism penetrated only much later into northern Europe, and therefore had to contend with the full force of the Reformation. Erasmus, who had found in the example of Valla the inspiration for his own life and work,² wrote in 1517 that he feared that under the cover of the study of ancient literature, paganism would raise its head -- for many people were Christians in appearance only.³ This distrust was shared by most of the Humanists of northern Europe in the first half of the sixteenth century, and they therefore appropriated chiefly the Stoic and Platonic elements of ancient culture, as more easily reconcilable with Christian earnestness and moral fervor. But about the middle of the century the paganism and

¹Cf. "Il genio della negazione e della indifferenza che nuocerà tanto all'Italia." Settembrini, L., Lezioni di Letteratura italiana, 16th ed., Naples (1894). I, 274.

²Erasmus frequently and throughout his life expressed this indebtedness. Especially significant in this connection are some youthful letters written in 1489 to Cornelius Gerard, in which he defends warmly the work and character of Valla, who has been maligned by "barbarian priests," etc. Allen, P.S., Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterdami. 3 vols. Oxford (1910). I, 112-120.

³Unus adhuc scrupulus habet animum meum, ne sub obtextur priscae

immorality of Italian culture, the "Italian danger", began to spread rapidly among the constantly growing class of non-clerical educated men. The English phase of this development will be discussed in the next chapter, but the French may be outlined here very briefly.

Though he had predecessors, less out-spoken and consistent than himself, in Rabelais, Desperiers, and Dolet, Montaigne may be considered the real originator of the pagan tradition in French thought and literature.¹ He did not conceal himself under the veil of an amusing allegory; Montaigne put down in his Essays the frank confessions of a man who was above all things sincere. Therefore, even though he lacked moral earnestness, his intellectual sincerity gave to his record of his inmost personal development that fascination and power which it has ever since exercised over thoughtful men. Such a man inevitably inspires discipleship and founds a tradition.

This personal development was in effect a revolution, an uprising against Stoicism, the current philosophy of the Humanists. Montaigne was never weary of railing at the unnatural rigidity of Stoicism; he himself knew but one precept, Follow Nature. And as his eminent Stoic contemporary, Du Vair, said, Nature and Stoicism can never be reconciled; we must choose which one of them we shall retain.² Montaigne saw clearly the necessity of this choice, and made it with calm insouciance. And the Nature he sought to elucidate and follow was his own individual and peculiar Nature.

litteraturae renascentis caput erigere conetur paganismus, ut sunt et inter Christianos qui titulo pene duntaxat Christum agnoscunt, caeterum intus gentilitatem spirant.— Allen, P.S., op. cit. II, 491.

¹Cf. Villey, Pierre, op. cit. I, 6: "Son lot véritable . . . a été d'acclimater la morale payenne en France."

²Du Vair, Les Oeuvres Politiques et Morales, Geneva (1621). p.899.

"I study myself," he said, "more than any other subject. It is my supernaturall Metaphysike, it is my naturall Philosophy."¹

Montaigne's upright and well-intentioned friend, the priest Pierre Charron (1541-1603) tried in vain to combine this naturalism of Montaigne with the Stoicism of Du Vair;² his book De la Sagesse (1601) was read only for its echoes of Montaigne, and shortly became known as the breviary of the Libertines, the "beaux-esprits," who, according to Pere Garasse, denied any divinity or supreme power in the world except Nature, which, they held, we must satisfy in all matters, without denying anything to our senses which they might desire in the exercise of their natural powers and faculties.³ The new names for these Libertines, the "esprits forts" and "beaux-esprits," indicate the characteristics of the movement in France in the seventeenth century; they prided themselves on their study of refinement, their cleverness, and their intellectual and moral audacity. Libertinism had won both a social and a philosophical success -- it could afford to be gay, care-free, satirical, confident of its position of superiority. It had behind it a great tradition; it had acquired a library of its own,⁴ it became an important force in the intellectual and literary life of France,

¹Montaigne, Essays, trans. Florio. Ed. Everyman, III, 331.

²Cf. Strowski, F., De Montaigne à Pascal, ed. cit. pp. 176-ff.

³Garasse, La Doctrine curieuse des beaux esprits de ce temps, Paris (1623). -- For a good summary of this volume, with quotations, see Notice sur Théophile, xxxix-ff., in the first volume of Théophile Oeuvres Complètes, ed. Alleaume, 2 vols., Paris (1856).

⁴This library, according to Garasse, included in the first rank, Pomponatius, Paracelsus and Macchiavelli; in the second, Cardanus, Vanini and Charron; in the third, the satires on the religious orders; but "outre et par-dessus ces trois ordres et livres, les Libertins ont en main le Rabelais comme l'Enchiridion du libertinage." -- Quoted by Strowski, op. cit. p. 160.

and reappeared in a long line of French classics from Moliere to Voltaire.

VI

The Revival of Greek Scepticism

Scepticism as a philosophical school was founded by Pyrrho of Elis, who after taking part in Alexander's campaign to India, settled in his native city and taught that seeking after knowledge was vain, and that indifference to all philosophical assertions was the only way to peace of mind. Against every proposition the truly wise man should balance its contrary and thus, by showing the futility of both, he might arrive at the happy state of imperturbability (ataraxia). But though Pyrrho thus absolutely denied the value of the life of reason, his ethics, strangely enough, were conservative and conventional; for this imperturbable agnostic held that the only guide in practical conduct was custom.

Pyrrho determined the fundamental doctrines of the ancient sceptical tradition, which lasted more or less continuously for five centuries and included among its leaders, Arcesilaus, Carneades, Aenesidemus and Sextus Empiricus. The writings of Sextus alone have been preserved,¹ and they, with Cicero and Diogenes Laertius, are the main source of our knowledge of the earlier adherents of the school. This long life of the Sceptical school in antiquity is explained largely by the persistent irritating dogmatism of the

¹The Pyrrhonic Hypotyposes and Against the Mathematicians: standard edition of Greek text with Latin translation, by Fabricius, Leipzig (1718); reprinted by Kuhn, 2 vols., Leipzig (1842).

schools it attacked, the Stoics and Epicureans, who, as Cicero said (De Natura Deorum, I, viii.), discussed the universe with such assurance, with the air of having just descended from an assembly of the gods.¹

Throughout the Middle Ages the sceptical philosophy of antiquity remained practically unknown. Some echoes of it from Cicero, Augustine, and the Noctes Atticae of Aulus Gellius, can be traced in the Polycraticus (Book VII) of John of Salisbury, in Henry of Ghent, and in Siger of Brabant, all of whom demonstrate the necessity of believing in the efficacy of the reason; but their discussions are superficial, and their knowledge of ancient scepticism necessarily extremely vague and fragmentary. A curious manuscript of the Hypotyposes of Sextus, in a bad Latin translation, dating from the Middle Ages, has indeed been found by Charles Jourdain in the Bibliothèque Nationale,² but it is an isolated phenomenon. The Middle Ages did not even know the names of Pyrrho and Sextus.

We have seen how the ambitious intellectual effort of the Middle Ages provoked the scepticism of Duns Scotus and William of Occam. But this scepticism, after all, was directed only against the dogmatism of the Aristotelian theologians; it was never per-

¹Zeller, Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics, London (1892); Brochard, Les Sceptiques grecs, Paris (1887); MacColl, Norman, Greek Sceptics from Pyrrho to Sextus, London (1869); Patrick, Mary Mills, Sextus Empiricus and Greek Scepticism, Cambridge (1899); Goedeckemeyer, Alb., Die Geschichte des Griechischen Skeptizismus, Leipzig (1905); Saisset, Emile, Le Scepticisme, 2nd ed., Paris (1865); Martha, C., Le Philosophe Carnéade à Rome, in Etudes Morales sur l'Antiquité, 4th ed., Paris (1905).

²See Jourdain, Charles, Excursions Historiques et Philosophiques à travers le Moyen Âge, Paris (1888); pp.201-217, Sextus Empiricus et la Philosophie Scolastique, to which I am indebted for the information in this paragraph.

mitted to go all the way to the bitterest disillusion. Alternatives to the Aristotelian logic were sought by such men as Petrus Hispanus (1226-1277), Nicolaus of Cusa (1401-1464) and Peter Ramus (1515-1572), and their effort testifies to the persistence of the faith that some sort of knowledge is possible. Even when a thorough scepticism first appears in De incertitudine et vanitate scientiarum (1531) by Cornelius Agrippa (1487-1535), we are prevented from attaching much significance to it by the fact that in the sixteenth century this book was considered only a source of amusing paradoxes with which gentlemen might spice their conversation.¹

But in 1562 the French scholar-publisher, Henri Estienne (1532-1598), reputed the "prince of atheists," revived classical scepticism by his publication of the Greek text with Latin translation and commentary, of the Hypotyposes of Sextus Empiricus. This volume was fated to fall into the hands of Montaigne and precipitate the crisis in his development by which he passed from the Stoicism of his first essays to the Naturalism of his greatest and most characteristic work. Through Montaigne, Pyrrhonism passed into Charron and the Libertine movement of France, until Pascal seized it as a propaedeutic to Christianity.

In this revival of Greek scepticism little emphasis was laid on the ethical ideal of imperturbability. What attracted the men of the Renaissance was the new destructive criticism of the common-sense theory of knowledge, which raised problems undreamed

¹ See Villey, Pierre, Les Sources, etc., II, 177-ff.

of in the Middle Ages. Nominalism had contended that universals were mere concepts, existed only in the mind of the thinker; but Greek scepticism declared that even as concepts they are futile and misleading, for all knowledge is built up from sense impressions, and who can test the reliability of our senses? Such imperfect examination of them as we can make -- a comparison of men with one another and of men with animals -- tends only to show that our senses are defective and give us a false and inadequate impression of the world about us. This was the challenge with which modern thought became familiar in Sextus, and which the seventeenth century labored to meet in a long series of treatises on the methods of knowledge. And in setting this new problem of modern thought, the scepticism of Sextus helped rid the Renaissance of the vestiges of medievalism and give the seventeenth century that modern cast which distinguishes it from the sixteenth. We are at home in the agnosticism of Joseph Glanvill, couched though it be in the rhythms of another age:

"Whatever I look upon within the amplitude of heaven and earth, is evidence of humane ignorance; For all things are a great darkness to us, and we are so to ourselves: The plainest things are as obscure, as the most confessedly mysterious; and the plants we tread on, are as much above us, as the stars and heavens. The things that touch us are as distant from us, as the pole; and we are as much strangers to ourselves, as to the inhabitants of America."¹

¹ Glanvill, Joseph, An Address to the Royal Society, in Scepsis Scientifica, London (1665).

CHAPTER TWO

SCEPTICAL TENDENCIES IN ENGLAND IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

I. Individualism in the English Reformation.- II. The Indifference of Queen Elizabeth.- III. Heresy as a Crime.
IV. The "Italian Danger."- V. Machiavellism in England.
VI. The "Atheism" of Marlowe and Raleigh.

In approaching the subject of the sceptical tendencies in England in the sixteenth century, the student must first be warned of the nature of his source-material. It is both fragmentary and unreliable. Necessarily the evidence is fragmentary for a movement of thought which the authorities, both ecclesiastical and secular, sought in every way to repress, even by means of not infrequent burnings at the stake. In England, as well as in France, Geneva, and Rome, intolerance in religion was the accepted principle, and our path through the sixteenth century is lighted by fires and human sacrifices. How great the effect of this repression was, can never be told; but we may assume that it was greater in appearance than in reality. No doubt many a free-thinker of that time, when brought before a solemn court, perhaps after a taste of torture, abjured sincerely and penitently; we can hardly realize, after three centuries of progress in science and higher criticism, how precarious religious doubt appeared in the sixteenth century, how difficult it was for the sceptic at that time to justify himself even to his own intellect and conscience; we unjustly doubt the sincerity of Raleigh and Bacon, when they speak as devout Christians. Nevertheless we must assume the existence of a large class who were

never led back into the straight path by fear, who secretly held and propagated dangerous notions, without incurring even any suspicion of heresy. And this class must have grown constantly larger and larger, until towards the end of the century the critical and sceptical spirit became general, especially among Englishmen educated abroad. The evidence, however, is not continuous; and sometimes it gives little more than vague hints. Yet from it we must construct our conception of a continuous sceptical development in the England of the Renaissance.

This evidence is also unreliable. No books on atheism by atheists could appear in sixteenth century England. Our information on such matters comes chiefly from the accusers, and an accusation of atheism in that day was no dispassionate, well-considered intellectual judgment; it was an insult, a whip-lash, a threat of horrible death. The term "atheist" had therefore very definite connotation to an Elizabethan, but its definition remained vague. It might mean "Papist" or "Italian"; it might mean "anti-Trinitarian"; it might mean merely a dabbler in natural science. And whenever it appears we have to decide for ourselves as precisely as we can, what ideas must have provoked this severe moral condemnation. Atheists, in the modern sense of the word, probably did not exist in the sixteenth century.

However, keeping these difficulties in mind, and remembering also that the general intellectual forces of the age were much the same in England as on the Continent, it should be possible to discover the significance of the few bits of evidence we have and relate them to the development of European thought. Shall we feel justified in assuming from them a continuous, though largely hidden

development? It is the purpose of this chapter to present this fragmentary evidence and see what conclusions can be drawn from it regarding the intellectual milieu of the English men of letters of the sixteenth century.¹

I

Individualism in the English Reformation

The moral and intellectual aspects of the Reformation, it has often been remarked, are naturally congenial to the wholesome-ness and independence of the British character. We expect, therefore, to find in England before the Reformation some indications of these national traits. And historians have pointed out, as was noted in the previous chapter, that Duns Scotus, Roger Bacon and William of Occam, all three of them great critics of the reigning Thomistic tradition in theology and philosophy, and the last named an influential critic of the pretensions of the pope to temporal power, were all natives of Britain. In the Lollardy of the fourteenth century, in the personality and writings of Wycliffe, in the Vision of Piers Plowman, the English character applied its moral

¹No consecutive account has hitherto been attempted of the sceptical tendencies in England during this period. Therefore, although the short discussions by Einstein, The Italian Renaissance in England, pp.155-175 and 291-307, on the "Italian danger" and Machiavellianism, and by Feuillerat, John Lyly, pp.50-ff., on the Italian influence, as well as the important researches of Boas on Marlowe, Kyd, and Raleigh, have furnished valuable information as well as points of departure in my search for material, the collection and arrangement of material for the purposes of this chapter was largely pioneer work. Where the field of possible sources is so extensive and so little explored with this specific aim, there is probably much more material to be found, but I feel that it would not alter the main features of my sketch. My specific obligations are indicated in my references.

bent to a renovation of the ethical and religious life of the nation, and created a popular tradition which powerfully influenced the sixteenth century.¹

At the threshold of the sixteenth century we meet again this moral and religious fervor united with quite unusual intellectual independence -- even audacity -- in the group of humanists gathered about John Colet. They sought a middle path between the dangers of Renaissance paganism and scholastic aridity.² Colet had been in Italy and seen how carefully the lamp of pagan philosophy had been tended, and how the true spirit of Christianity was neglected for pagan epicureanism. Likewise in the introduction to his edition of the New Testament in 1516, Erasmus observed that "Platonists, Pythagoreans, and the disciples of all other philosophers, are well instructed and ready to fight for their sect. Why do not the Christians with yet more abundant zeal espouse the cause of their Master and Prince? Shall Christ be put in comparison with Zeno and Aristotle -- his doctrines with their insignificant precepts?"³ But these men believed that paganism was a natural reaction to scholasticism, and that a complete liberation from scholastic thought and method, and a renewal of patristic and apostolic Christianity, was the wisest attack on the dangers of the Renaissance.⁴ In this spirit Colet gave his lectures on Romans at Oxford in 1496-7. He did not seek a philosophical system; he

¹Gairdner, James, Lollardy and the Reformation in England, 4 vols., London (1908). The popularity of the Vision of Piers Plowman was revived by the Reformation and there were five editions of it between 1550 and 1562. See Schelling, Life and Writings of George Gascoigne, Boston (1893). p. 78.

²Seebohm, F., The Oxford Reformers, Chap. III, iii. Ed. Everyman, p. 62.

³Seebohm, Chapter XI, i. p. 202. ⁴Seebohm, Chap. III, iii.

rejected the textarian method of exposition of the scholastics and its fourfold interpretation of Scripture: the literal, the allegorical, the moral and the anagogical; he rejected, in practice at least, even the theory of literal inspiration.¹ He sought to understand Paul and the Romans as characters in history, to appreciate the human element in the epistle, - in short to study this holy text as a historical document and then base on this study an interpretation of its religious teaching.² Colet was inspired in his work by a noble religious purpose; but his method of interpretation was so novel, so liberal and individualistic in spirit, that we are not surprised that the theologians of the medieval school tried to prove him and his "New Learning" heretical. For though both Colet and his friends remained within the Catholic Church, they formed an essential part of the Reformation movement; and not infrequently, as in Colet's theory of the "accommodation" of Scripture to the apprehension of man,³ or in More's theory of tolerance of a multiplicity of sects,⁴ they were far more liberal even than the Protestantism of the sixteenth century.

These Catholic reformers therefore contributed unintentionally, one may say unwillingly, to the future Anglican tradition. The New Learning was disseminated for political purposes by Henry VIII,⁵ and was turned to religious uses by such Protestant leaders as Tyndale. As a result, a strong Protestant party was pro-

¹Seebohm, Chap. X, iii. pp.195-6 and Chap. XI, p. 208.

²Lupton, J. H., Dean Colet's Lectures on the Romans, London (1873). Seebohm, Chap. II, ii. Cf. Erasmus's philological and historical prerequisites for Biblical exegesis, in Seebohm, Chap. XI, pp.205-ff.

³Seebohm, Chap. II, iii. pp.27-ff.

⁴More, Utopia, ed. Lumby, J.R., Cambridge (1913). pp. 143-ff.

⁵Gairdner, Lollardy and the Reformation, I, 307-ff.

duced, which was powerful enough to pass through the Marian persecutions and dominate the really national religious establishment formed in the reign of Queen Elizabeth.

At Oxford, however, the tradition of Colet and Erasmus, as well as the influence of Protestantism, seems to have broken down almost completely under Mary. At the accession of Elizabeth the professorships were held by Roman Catholics of the old school of theology, haters of humanistic enlightenment, whose private morals seem to have been those of the clericals in Boccaccio and Rabelais. Jewel, writing to Bullinger at Zurich in 1559, said that at Oxford "there are scarcely two individuals who think with us; and even they are so dejected and broken in spirit, that they can do nothing."¹ Elizabeth came to the throne when Oxford, as all England, was in that deepest darkness which precedes dawn.

But when Protestantism came into power in the reign of Elizabeth, both of its chief factions, the Puritans as well as the Anglicans, carefully repressed all extreme phases of religious individualism. Both parties equally dreaded a democratic church government as unsafe and unsound. The ranks were drilled into uniformity in these churches militant, and discipline enforced by an official hierarchy. Consequently individualism sought expression in the last two or three decades of the century in the uprising in various parts of England of Separatist movements, with which Robert Browne was in his earlier years connected, and which were commonly called Brownist after him.² Out of these Separatist movements, the

¹Zurich Letters, ed. Robinson, H. (Parker Society, Vol. 43). p.33. Cf. also pp. 11, 12, 29, 55, 77.

²Dexter, H. M., The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years (1880). Burrage, C., The True Story of Robert Browne, Oxford, (1906).

leaders of which were so severely persecuted, grew the modern Baptist and Congregational churches.¹

Thus persisted and triumphed what was at the same time a national trait of independence and the Renaissance spirit of individualism; manifested continuously from the Lollardy of the fourteenth century to the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth; not created by statesmen, though manipulated by Henry VIII and Elizabeth to serve their own political purposes; remaining throughout a popular tradition, though it pervaded the Humanism of the Oxford Reformers and appropriated the New Learning as its own instrument; finally, as a protest against the oligarchical and hierarchical principles of the dominant Protestantism, establishing a democratic ecclesiastical organization which has grown into two of the most powerful and influential religious denominations of modern times. In England, as on the Continent during the Renaissance and Reformation, the principle of individualism was coming into its own, never again to be suppressed by authority.

¹Browne recanted under pressure. Two other leaders, Greenwood and Sparrow, both Cambridge men, were imprisoned in 1586, and remained in the Fleet from 1587 until they were hanged at Tyburn in 1593. About seventy others were imprisoned in the later years of Elizabeth for their Separatist opinions. See Selbie, W. B., English Sects, Chap. III. The bad odor in which these sectarians were at that time appears from the collocation of names in the following epitaph written for Martin Mar-Prelate:

O! vos Martinistae
Et vos Brounistae
Et Famililovistae,
Et Anabaptistae,
Et Omnes sectistae
Et Machivelistae
Et Atheistae,
Quorum dux fuit iste
Lugete singuli.

Death and Burial of Martin Mar-Prelate, Works of Nashe, ed. Grosart, I, 199.

II

The Indifference of Queen Elizabeth

In any account of the enlightenment which came over England in the sixteenth century, the influence of Queen Elizabeth must find some place. To a remarkable degree she impressed her personality on the nation she ruled. She was a truly national monarch; she won the affection of all her subjects; the court became the center of the national life as it had never been before. Her character lay open to all the world; and her attitude in matters of religion cannot have been without profound influence, at first chiefly on the court, but through the court on the educated and enlightened people throughout the nation. For, though the Queen was punctilious in her observance of the forms of religion, her opinion of its substance must have been apparent to many of her subjects who reflected on her policies in ecclesiastical matters.

The Queen tried to form, out of the discordant elements bequeathed to her by the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI and Mary, a truly national church. Her whole effort was animated, not by any moral, religious or even ecclesiastical purpose, but by a purely political purpose of uniting her people. She faced at the beginning of her reign a problem that could only be solved by Machiavellian statesmanship, though she managed to have her conduct attributed to womanly weakness rather than to unprincipled politics. She flirted with the factions on the Continent which regarded England only as their legitimate prey; equally deftly she kept up the hopes, without committing herself, of the extreme factions, both Protestant and Catholic, among her subjects. And the foreign suitors who were kept

dangling so long were driven to no greater desperation than the Queen's conscientious bishops, who whenever they sought to do their duty towards church and state by harassing the non-conformists, found their zeal checked by the Queen.

"This Machiavel government," wrote Parker to Burghley himself, in 1572, "is strange to me, for it bringeth forth strange fruits. As soon is the papist favoured as is the true Protestant. And yet forsooth my levity doth mar all. When the true subject is not regarded but overthwarted, when the rebel is borne with, a good commonwealth, scilicet. When the faithful subject and officer hath spent his wit to search, to find, to indict, to arraign, and to condemn, yet must they be kept still for a fair day to cut our own throats."¹

In Burleigh the Queen found a minister who, though he had a leaning towards the Puritan party, was as ready as herself to seek a purely political settlement of the religious difficulties of the time. Burleigh showed a ready talent for accommodation to changes in power or in opinion. As Lloyd said of him: "He saw the interest of the state changed six times, and died an honest man: the crown put upon four heads, yet he continued a faithful subject: religion changed, as to the public constitution of it, five times, yet he kept the faith."²

This purely political spirit in which the Queen and her minister dealt with religious problems, led both to espouse the principle of toleration. The Queen, in her reply to the Papal Bull of Excommunication of 1570, declared that

"Her majesty would have all her loving subjects to understand, that, as long as they shall openly continue in the observation of her laws, and shall not

¹Parker Correspondence, (Parker Society) No. cccxvii, p. 391.
Cf. also No. cccxvi, p. 414.

²Nares, Burghley, III, 326. Quoted in Klein, A.J., Intolerance in the Reign of Elizabeth, Boston (1917). p. 13.

wilfully and manifestly break them by their open actions, her majesty's means is not to have any of them molested by any inquisition or examination of their consciences in causes of religion; but to accept and entreat them as her good and obedient subjects. She meaneth not to enter into the inquisition of any men's consciences as long as they shall observe her laws in their open deeds."¹

And in 1583 Burleigh suggested a revision of the oath of supremacy for the benefit of Catholics, so that it could not be construed to involve anything but patriotic rallying to the support of the Queen in time of national danger; for, he said, "of this commodity will ensue that . . . such priests as would refuse that oath, then no tongue could say, for shame, that they suffer for religion, if they did suffer."²

Elizabeth and her great minister, we feel, must have understood, better than most, the rational and enlightening tendencies which emerged during the sixteenth century and distinguish its end from its beginning, and which became so pervasive under the first Stuarts. Though the Queen loved Catholic pomp and ceremony, she was intellectually nearer Deism; during her reign her favorite, Raleigh, reputed an atheist, was safe from persecution. Her tolerance was due not only to political reasons, but as well to her personal indifference in religious questions. And her example was no doubt as effective, though in a more subtle manner, among the educated men of England, as the dramatic "political" conversion and subsequent religious indifference of Henry IV was among the French.³ Froude has admirably described the sceptical tendency

¹Klein, op. cit., pp. 37-8.

²Scott, Sir Walter, Somers Tracts, 13 vols. London (1809). I, 165. Quoted by Klein, op. cit., p. 61.

³On the stimulus to Libertinism by the example of Henry IV see Perrens, F.T., Les Libertins en France, Paris (1899). pp. 59-ff.

evident in both these monarchs; both Elizabeth and Henry, he says,

"held at the bottom intrinsically the same views. They believed generally in certain elementary truths lying at the base of all religions; and the difference in the outward expressions of those truths, and the passionate animosities which those differences engendred, were only not contemptible to them from the practical mischief which they produced. . . . Neither of the two sovereigns shared the profound horror of falsehood, which was at the heart of the Protestant movement. They had the statesman's temperament, to which all specific religions are equally fictions of the imagination."¹

Of course this religious indifference of the Queen is more obvious to the modern student in his library than to the Elizabethan country squire, for instance. Yet it is hard to believe that about the Court and London, where gossip spread quickly and the Queen's sacred reputation was not always spared, no one but Archbishop Parker should ever have whispered the word "Machiavellian" in connection with the Queen and Burghley. We can hardly expect documents to prove the case directly; he would have been a rash letter-writer or printer who risked his right hand or his life by breathing any suspicion against the Queen. But Elizabeth was a true daughter of the Renaissance, and the spirit of the Renaissance, with its paganism and religious indifference, was permitted at her Court. The century which had begun with Colet and More and their Christian Humanism, closed with Marlowe and the young Donne, with Raleigh and Shakespeare.

¹Froude, History of England, N. Y. (1870). XII, 569-570. Cf. Green: "No woman ever lived who was so totally destitute of the sentiment of religion." Short History, Chap. VII, 3.

III

Heresy as a Crime

Before leaving ecclesiastical history, we must look more closely at a significant aspect of it, the persecutions for heresy. A narrative of these persecutions will not only throw light on the history of toleration, but it will explain the dangers attending a liberal culture in the sixteenth century; it will throw into relief the heroism of many of the sincere and fearless thinkers of the Renaissance and Reformation. A study of the penal statutes will help us to understand the incidents discussed later, in the lives of Kyd, Marlowe and Raleigh.

In the earlier Middle Ages there were no statutes in England making heresy a penal offense. But in the bitter conflict with the Lollards three statutes were placed on the statute-book and remained the authority for the persecutions up to the reign of Elizabeth. The first of these, in 1382, merely gave the civil authorities the right to hold heretics in prison until they satisfied the claims of the church. But on March 10, 1401, Parliament passed an act declaring that such heretics as did not recant should be publicly burned. In 1414 another act provided that trials for heresy should be held in a bishop's court.¹ The burnings had already begun a week before the act of 1401, for on March 2 a William Sawtre was publicly burned by order of a writ de haeretico comburendo issued by the king on February 26. This illegal incident

¹ Stubbs, Constitutional History, Oxford (1880). Chap. XIX, sec. 404 III, 381-395. Stephen, Sir James F., A History of the Criminal Law of England, 3 vols. London (1883). II, 437-469.

seems to have given rise to the notion that the king by common law could issue such a writ.

As the statutes did not define heresy, there were a large number of burnings for all sorts of variations from orthodoxy throughout the fifteenth century and the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII. The bishop's courts had broad precedents, and the accused no real legal basis for a defense. But the statutes were originally intended and chiefly applied against the Lollards and such later sects, as the Anabaptists, which resembled them.

Henry VIII, as we have seen, encouraged for his own purposes the spread of mild heresy in England, and in 1534 the heresy act of 1401 was annulled; in 1547 all other heresy acts on the books were repealed. The results were immediately somewhat more than the king and his advisers had looked for. Conservative Protestants were frightened by the revelation of what real freedom of opinion, real individualism in religion, so quickly led to.

"How dangerously," Hooper wrote to Bullinger in 1549, "England is afflicted with heresies, God only knows. There are some who say the soul of man is no better than the soul of a beast, and is mortal and perishable. There are wretches who dare, in their conventicles, not only to deny that Christ is our Saviour, but to call that blessed Child a mischief-maker and a deceiver. A great part of the country is Popish, and sets at nought God and the magistrates."¹

Hooper had reason to complain; for he alludes in another letter to Bullinger, dated June 25, 1549, to some of his own personal difficulties as he read public lectures twice a day in St. Pauls to a crowded church. "The Anabaptists," he says, "flock to the

¹Quoted by Froude, History of England, N. Y. (1867). V, 159.

place, and give me much trouble with their opinions respecting the incarnation of the Lord."¹

In this flowering period of heresy, it is especially important to note the rapid and universal spread, or perhaps the spontaneous rise, of a denial of the divinity of Christ, the old heresy of the Arians. We have a full account of such tenets in a letter from Martin Micronius to Henry Bullinger, August 14, 1551:

"We, who are desirous to hand down to the churches the sincere doctrine of God, are attacked on every side. We have not only to contend with the papists, who are almost every where ashamed of their errors, but much more with the sectaries and Epicureans and pseudo-evangelicals. In addition to the ancient errors respecting paedobaptism, the incarnation of Christ, the authority of the magistrate, the (lawfulness of an) oath, the property and community of goods, and the like, new ones are rising up every day, with which we have to contend. The chief opponents, however, of Christ's divinity are the Arians, who are now beginning to shake our churches with greater violence than ever, as they deny the conception of Christ by the Virgin. Their principal arguments may be reduced under three heads: The first is respecting the unity of God, as declared throughout the scriptures both of the old and new Testament; and that the doctrine as well as the name of the Trinity is a novel invention, as not being mentioned in any part of scripture. Their next argument is this: the scripture, they say, which every where acknowledges one God, admits and professes that this one God is the Father alone, (Joh.xvii.3.), who is also called one God by Paul (1.Cor.viii.6.). Lastly, they so pervert the passages which seem to establish the divinity of Christ, as to say that none of them refer intrinsically to Christ himself, but that he has received all from another, namely, from the Father; (Joh.v.Matt.xxviii.) and they say that God cannot receive from God; and that Christ was only in this respect superior to any of mankind, that he received more gifts from God the Father."²

¹Original Letters Relative to the English Reformation, ed. Robinson, H., Cambridge (1847). I, 65.

²Original Letters, ed. cit. II, 574.

In spite of these dangerous tendencies, freedom was maintained until the end of the reign of Edward VI. But in the first year of Mary's reign, 1555, the three acts against heresy were revived and enforced not only against Arians but all Protestants as well.¹ As the Heresy Acts had not defined heresy, what proportion of the heretics burned in the reign of Mary were merely Protestants can only be guessed.² To the Catholics they were of course all heretics. And that there was some sort of affinity between the English Protestants of the Puritan wing, and the Lollards, the Anabaptists and the Arians, is apparent in that all these parties flourished in the same section of England, the eastern counties and London. Kent and Essex, wrote the Protestant Bishop Hooper in 1550, "is troubled with the frenzy of the anabaptists more than any other part of the kingdom."³

¹In 1556 three Arians from three different parishes in Eastern England confessed upon trial to practically identical tenets: they objected to the service in Latin, as unedifying; they denied the real presence of Christ's body and the Trinity, and two of them added that it was wrong to put a man to death for the sake of conscience. Like most of the heretics arraigned, they seem to have abjured their heresies. See Strype Memorials, London (1721). III, 332. On the same page Strype records that at Frankfort a Dr. Bartholomew Traherne lectured on the Gospel of St. John, "designedly against the Arians, who began much to encrease in this times, (especially among Protestants) . . . "

²According to Strype, 288 were burned in those four years. Memorials, ed. cit. III, Catalogue of Originals, pp. 291-3.

³Original Letters, ed. cit. I, 87. Of course the coast towns were most likely to come in contact with new opinions from abroad. The stimulus of commerce upon liberal thought appears in the freedom of opinion allowed in Venice and the Netherlands, the two great commercial nations of the time. On the role of the merchant in the English Reformation, see Gairdner, Lollardy and the Reformation, I, 309. Jewel mentions in a letter dated 1560, that in the French church in London "there are some unquiet and turbulent men, who are openly beginning to profess Arianism." Zurich Letters, p. 93.

In 1558, on the accession of Queen Elizabeth, the heresy acts revived under Mary were formally repealed. But a curious substitution was made in the provision for a Court of High Commission to try ecclesiastical offenses. At the same time heresy was defined as that which was so adjudged "by the authority of the canonical scriptures, or by the first four general councils." This definition exempted all differences in the Protestant-Catholic controversy, but not the despised Anabaptists and Arians. The statute provided no penalty apparently on the assumption that the royal writ de haeretico comburendo was common law. In the whole reign of Elizabeth this law resulted in only six executions.¹ There were no doubt many more recantations than executions. But in 1575 five Dutch Anabaptists were indicted, two of whom, John Wielmacker and Hendrick Ter Woort, were burned at Smithfield on July 22.² Four Arians were burned at various times at Norwich. Matthew Hamont, a ploughwright, who was a "coarse kind of deist, holding the Gospel to be a fable, Christ a sinner, and the Holy Ghost a nonentity," was burned May 20, 1579. An obscure John Lewes was burned on September 18, 1583. And Peter Cole, a tanner, met the same fate in 1587.³ More celebrated is the case of Francis Kett, a Cambridge Master of Arts, who was condemned by Bishop Scambler of Norwich in 1588.

The last execution for heresy in England was in 1613, when James I ordered two Arians, Legate and Wightman, to be burned. Coke

¹Stephen, History of the Criminal Law, II, 462, says only two, citing Hale and Froude as his authorities. They all overlooked the Norwich executions.

²Strype, Annals, London (1725). II, 380.

³Dictionary of National Biography, VIII, 1137.

raised objections to the legality of the process, denying that the writ de haeretico comburnedo was common law. But James, for political reasons, insisted that the executions should take place. In 1618, however, a Portuguese ex-monk condemned to be burned, was reprieved by the king, and since then no conviction for heresy has ever been obtained.¹ In 1677 all acts making heresy a crime, and authorising punishment by death in ecclesiastical matters, were formally repealed.

Although the law remained on the statute book so long, the real progress in tolerance, it is clear from the above account, was made in the sixteenth century. In comparison with the reign of Henry VII and the first part of the reign of Henry VIII, the age of Elizabeth is remarkable for its freedom of thought and speech and its neglect of the Christian duty of prosecuting heresy. We must credit some of this progress to the Queen and her advisers, and some to the general movement of thought in Europe. But the world owes a debt to those obscure and despised, but unyielding, Anabaptists and Arians who were tortured to death under the provision of the act of 1401. Froude, speaking of the execution of twelve Dutch Anabaptists in 1535, has commemorated them all and given them their place in history; of these executions, he says,

"the details are gone,-- the names are gone. Poor Hollanders they were, and that is all. Scarcely the fact seemed worth the mention, so shortly it is told in a passing paragraph. For them no Europe was agitated, no courts were ordered into mourning, no papal hearts trembled with indignation. At their deaths the world looked on complacent, indifferent, or exulting. Yet here, too, out of twenty-five common men and women were found fourteen who, by no terror of stake or torture, could be tempted to say that they believed what they did not believe.

¹Frere, W.H., History of the English Church in the Reigns of Elizabeth and James I, London (1904). pp.370-ff.

History for them has no word of praise; yet they, too, were not giving their blood in vain. Their lives might have been as useless as the lives of most of us. In their deaths they assisted to pay the purchase money for England's freedom."¹

IV

The "Italian Danger"

Of all the foreign influences acting upon English life and thought in the sixteenth century, the Italian was by far the most powerful. This preeminence of Italy in the sixteenth century was due to her early development, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, of the highest type of humanistic and pagan culture, expressing itself in manners, learning, art and literature. Already in the fifteenth century Englishmen went to Italy to study the New Learning which was supplanting medievalism, and thither Colet went to prepare for a career as teacher of the veritable religion of the New Testament. Erasmus, as we have seen,² was inspired by the example of Valla.

But by the middle of the sixteenth century this splendor of Italy was nothing but an afterglow. The Reformation had made the Church turn hostile to the New Learning; in 1540 Paulus Jovius lamented that scholarship had migrated from Italy to Germany. And according to Jebb, the most learned Italian of the latter half of the century, Cardinal Baronius (1538-1607), the author of Annales Ecclesiastici, was unacquainted with Greek.³ With this degradation

¹Froude, History of England, Vol.II, N.Y. (1868). Chap.IX, 359.

²Chap. I, p. 57.

³Jebb, in Cambridge Modern History, I, Chap. xvi, 568.

of Italian culture came of course a change in the character and intentions of the travellers who flocked to Italy from all parts of Europe.¹ They no longer sought a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew; they might study medicine at Padua; but most of them went to Italy to acquire something more popular and superficial than learning, namely a courtly manner, Italian affectations, Italian oaths, an audacious gallantry with the ladies, and an acquaintance with a vernacular literature which was the most artistic in form and in thought the most thoroughly emancipated in Europe. In short, Italy, no longer the home of Humanism as Ficino, Erasmus, and Colet understood it, had become the disseminator of Paganism, the school of the Epicureans and Libertines.

Ascham has recorded with definiteness -- and, we may believe, with substantial accuracy -- the effect of Italian travel on the average Englishman. These "Italianated Englishmen," he says,

"have in more reverence the Triumphs of Petrarch than the Genesis of Moses; they make more account of Tully's Offices than St. Paul's Epistles; of a tale in Boccace, than a story of the Bible. Then they count as fables the holy mysteries of Christian religion. They make Christ and his gospel only serve civil policy. Then neither religion cometh amiss to them: in time they be promoters of both openly; in place again mockers of both privily; . . . For when they dare, in company where they like, they boldly laugh to scorn both protestant and papist. They care for no Scripture; they make no count of general councils; they contemn the consent of the church; they pass for no doctors; they mock the pope, they rail on Luther; they allow neither side; they like none, but only themselves. The mark they shoot at, the end they look for, the heaven they desire, is only their own present pleasure and private profit; whereby they plainly declare of whose school, of what religion they be; that is, Epicures in living, and *ἑταῖροι* in doctrine. This last word is no more unknown now to plain Englishmen, than the person was un-

¹Einstein, Lewis, Italian Renaissance in England, N.Y. (1902). Chap. IV. Howard, Clare, English Travellers of the Renaissance, London (1914).

known sometime in England, until some Englishman took pains to fetch that develish opinion out of Italy. . .

"And yet these men, in matters of divinity, openly pretend a great knowledge, and have privately to themselves a very compendious understanding of all; which nevertheless they will utter, when and where they list. And that is this: All the mysteries of Moses, the whole law and ceremonies, the Psalms and Prophets, Christ and his gospel, GOD, and the devil, heaven and hell, faith, conscience, sin, death, and all, they shortly wrap up, they quickly expound with this one half verse of Horace, Credat Judaeus Apella."¹

We smile today at Ascham's fear of such innocuous authors as Petrarch and Cicero. But we mis-read the passage if we do not see in it a valuable document on the outward appearance of the "Italian Danger." The men who brought it from Italy were cultivated and enthusiastic students of literature. On their return, they did not parade in public their irreligion and immorality; Ascham tells us that they observed the law and went to church. Only in the seclusion of a private library, perhaps, surrounded by intimate friends who could be trusted, would the "Italianate Englishman" bring out, in addition to Tully and Petrarch, those more dangerous volumes of Machiavelli, Pomponatius, and others, and discuss those hazardous doubts which were punishable at the stake. The severity of the statutes made the dissemination of sceptical ideas perilous and secret. And therefore the scepticism and indifference which was at the heart of the Italian culture which English appropriated in the reign of Elizabeth, was cloaked by a noble enthusiasm for letters.

¹Ascham Schoolmaster, Works, ed. Giles, IV, 161-2. For corroboration of Ascham's account, see Feuillerat, John Lyly, Cambridge (1910). pp. 51-5, and Einstein, op. cit. pp. 158-ff.

Ascham's protest was futile. Italian culture possessed the Court. It dominated the drama, which was protected by the Queen herself against the attacks of the English Puritan bourgeois; from Marlowe to Ford the English drama is almost entirely free from the theological preconceptions of the Reformation -- even of Christianity. Through the Court and the drama, the paganism of Italy penetrated among the nobility and gentry, the universities and the Inns of Court. Already in 1589, Thomas Cooper, Bishop of Winchester, could say that there were in England "an infinite number of Epicures and Atheists."¹ In 1593 Thomas Nashe gave the following advice to the University men that were called to preach at Paul's Cross and the Court:

"Arme yourselues against nothing but Atheisme, meddle not so much with Sects & forraine opinions, but let Atheisme be the onely string you beate on; for there is no Sect now in England so scattered as Atheisme. In vayne doe you preach, in vayne doe you teach, if the roote that nourisheth all the branches of security be not thorowly digd up from the bottome. You are not halfe so wel acquainted as them that lyue continually about the Court and Citty, how many followers this damnable paradoxe hath: how many high wits it hath bewitcht."²

This diffusion of free thought was a part of that complete secularization of culture and thorough paganism which characterizes the great literary outburst at the end of the sixteenth century.

But this development did not take place unchallenged. Of course the foppish manners of some "Italianate" Englishmen excited universal ridicule and contempt, but there was also an

¹Cooper, Thomas, An Admonition to the People of England, Arber's Reprint (1895). p. 15.

²Nashe, Christs Tears over Jerusalem, Works, ed. McKerrow. II, 121.

intellectual and spiritual resistance to the immoral and sceptical nature of the Italian influence. Many open-minded men studied the "new thought" of the time with the greatest care, and rejected it. Only by this supposition can we explain that almost total absence of any trace in English literature of Giordano Bruno, which has excited so much comment.¹ Bruno was in England from the spring of 1583 until October 1585. He published seven works in England; two of them he dedicated to Sidney. But Sidney seems not to have taken the pantheistic enthusiasms of the Italian very seriously; on his death in 1586 he left an incomplete translation of a quite different work, the treatise De la verité de la religion chrestienne by Duplessis-Mornay, the Huguenot friend of Languet. Sidney was a genuine Christian humanist, and he undoubtedly saw that the thought of Bruno was inconsistent with his own tastes and principles. Likewise Spenser, whose Cantos on Mutability are probably indebted to Bruno, studied the novel ideas familiarised by the Italian influence, and either rejected them or adapted them to harmonize with a philosophy of life in many respects resembling that of Sidney.

In studying such men as Spenser and Sidney, men of firm intellectual character as well as of philosophical comprehension, who lived in a stimulating age of ferment and conflict of ideas, we must consider carefully not only the sources, but the purposes of their many borrowings from other writers. They did not read without critical acumen, and their intimate knowledge of an author does not always imply discipleship. This commonplace principle has been

¹McIntyre, J. Lewis, Giordano Bruno, London (1903). pp. 21-ff.
Elton, Oliver, Modern Studies, London (1907). pp. 24-ff.

obscured in connection with Sidney and Spenser by even so distinguished a scholar as Professor Greenlaw. For instance, in a remark on Sidney,¹ he says that "Du Bartas paid tribute to Sidney, who was greatly interested in the flood of Protestant literature that was coming from France, and who seems to have been so well acquainted with the author of La Sepmaine as he was with Bruno. Thus the two contending forces met in this brilliant young Englishman." Forces may meet in mortal combat, but it is clear from the context that the meeting here meant, is an impossible reconciliation. Similar is the tenor of Professor Greenlaw's article² in which he shows with great success that Spenser's conception of Mutability was indebted to Lucretius for descriptive details and imagery. But he also implies that Spenser accepted the Lucretian philosophy. "Spenser,"³ he says, "was like Plato in the wide range of his interests and in his indifference to forming a consistent philosophical system. The Lucretian element in his work is only another bit of evidence of his intellectual curiosity." Spenser, it is true, had intellectual curiosity. But to assume that Spenser accepted the anarchistic atomism of Lucretius is to assume that he was neutral in the conflict between Jove and the Titans, a conflict in which even the serene Goethe declared himself on the side of Jove. Spenser was not neutral. His cantos on Mutability are his last, most philosophical grappling with the terrible problem of Change which had haunted Spenser from his

¹Studies in Philology. XVII, 324, note.

²Greenlaw, A. E., Spenser and Lucretius, in Studies in Philology. XVII, 439-ff.

³Ibid. p. 464.

melancholy youth to the end of his career. He sought all his life in anguish for a solid footing somewhere among the shifting sands, something "eterne in Mutabilitie." We know moreover that Spenser thought that he had conquered even that Lucretian philosophy which Mutability presented as proof that it should have the supremacy over Jove; for at the conclusion Jove was "confirmed in his imperial see." And the imperfect Faerie Queene ends appropriately with an expression of the deepest longing in Spenser's intellectual and spiritual life, rising at last to prayer:

"Then gin I thinke on that which Nature sayd,
Of that same time when no more Change shall be,
But stedfast rest of all things firmly stayd
Upon the pillours of Eternity,
That is contrayr to Mutabilitie:
For, all that moueth, doth in Change delight:
But thence-forth all shall rest eternally
With Him that is the God of Sabbath hight:
O that great Sabbath God, graunt me that Sabaoths sight."

Sidney and Spenser were the most distinguished men of letters with Puritan leanings. But there were a host of less important writers and pamphleteers, Puritan Jeremiahs, who, in their unenlightened diatribes against the infection of Italian paganism, yet contrived to speak pretty much the mind of the average Englishman on many questions; they were not lovers of art and fastidiousness, but they had an English sense for soundness and wholesomeness in character. And in one respect at least, in the general indignation against what were believed to be the teachings of Machiavelli, the opposition to the Italian Renaissance in England acquired a truly national character.

V

Machiavellism in England

Machiavelli's reputation in the Renaissance no doubt was exaggerated and distorted; nevertheless, a man's reputation is always a guide as to the nature of his general influence. As was noted in the previous chapter, the Frenchman Garasse placed Machiavelli in the first rank in the library of the libertines. And the Italian Vanini, whose mysterious career in England, France and Italy, and whose sensational burning at Toulouse in 1619, attracted the attention of Europe, referred to him as Nicolaus Macchiavellus, Atheorum facile princeps.¹ With this estimate of Machiavelli all northern Europe agreed, and England was no exception. His cold and calculating selfishness, his absolute indifference towards religious thought and feeling, and above all, his avowed practice of dissimulation and deceit, these characteristics of Machiavelli as popularly conceived in England, distinguished him as the exemplar and champion of the most dangerous tendencies of the Italian influence. And this moral indignation against the Florentine was combined in the average Englishman with a feeling of insulted patriotism, and often also with religious fanaticism, so that the anti-Machiavellian animus became at times a fury.

The study of Machiavelli began early. If we may trust Cardinal Pole, Thomas Cromwell regarded the Prince as the best practical guide for statesmanship, and the career of Cromwell cer-

¹Vanini, Amphitheatrum aeternae providentiae, Lyon (1615) p.35. Quoted by F. v.Bezold, Historische Zeitschrift, vol.113(1914) p.308, n.2.

tainly lends color to the accusation. A recent writer has tried to trace the influence of Machiavelli in the state papers of Burleigh, and to show a probability of the Queen's acquaintance with the works of the Italian.¹ He might have strengthened his case by quoting from a sermon preached before the Queen by Edwin Sandys, in which only three non-Christian writers on the state are mentioned: Plato, Aristotle and Machiavelli.

"There is no policy," the divine warned the Queen, "no wisdom, like the wisdom of God. The commonwealths which Aristotle and Plato have framed in their books, otherwise full of wisdom, yet compared with divine policies, with that city for whose sake and benefit the Lord doth watch, what are they but fancies of foolish men? As for Machiavel's inventions, they are but the dreams of a brain-sick person, founded upon the draft of man, and not upon godly wisdom, which only hath good effect."²

In this connection also we may recall Archbishop Parker's jocular, but pointed imputation of Machiavellism in his confidential letter to Burleigh, quoted earlier in this chapter. About the same time, that is, in 1573 and 1574, we have evidence that Machiavelli was read eagerly by the young men at Cambridge, and that Sidney was acquainted with him.³ From that time on his works seem to have circulated freely in Italian among educated men; Harvey declared in 1579 that at Cambridge his works had supplanted all others.⁴

¹Phillips, W. Alison, The Influence of Macchiavelli on the Reformation in England, Nineteenth Century, vol. 40 (1896). 907-ff.

²Sermons of Edwin Sandys, ed. Ayre, John (Parker Society). p.153.

³Harvey, Gabriel, Letterbook, ed. Scott. (Camden Society) p.174.
Meyer, Edward, Machiavelli and the Elizabethan Drama, Weimar (1897) pp. 14-ff.

⁴Harvey, Letterbook. p. 79.

We must conclude, however, that Machiavelli was not widely known at first hand in England in the sixteenth century. A translation of the Art of War appeared in 1573, and of the Florentine History in 1595, but the Discorsi and Il Principe were apparently considered too dangerous and ill-famed to be published in English versions. The English reputation of Machiavelli was in fact not derived primarily from a study of his own works, but from the attack made on him in 1576 by a French Huguenot, Innocent Gentillet, who in his Anti-Machiavel laid the Massacre of St. Bartholomew to the influence of his works.¹ This treatise was very influential in England; and Meyer has shown that even those writers who had read Machiavelli, were unable to keep distinct the true Florentine as he appears in his own works, and the tradition built up in England on the basis of the book of Gentillet.

The method of Gentillet was to systematize the ideas of Machiavelli into fifty maxims, thus throwing into relief their sceptical and immoral aspects, and devote a commentary to refuting each maxim. "These maxims," says Burd, "were commonly accepted as an adequate summary, and it is impossible not to feel that they are in a large degree, responsible for 'Machiavellism.'"² A few of these maxims will sufficiently explain the religious and ethical aspects of Machiavellism:

"A Prince above all things ought to wish and desire to be esteemed Devout, although hee be not so indeed.

¹Meyer, op. cit. pp. 19-ff.

²Il Principe, ed. Burd. Oxford (1891). p.54. Gentillet's maxims are reprinted by Meyer, op. cit., pp.10-14; and the Elizabethan translation by Patericke is included by Boyer, C. V., The Villain as Hero in Elizabethan Tragedy, London (1914), pp. 241-5, from whom my quotations are made.

"A Prince ought to sustaine and confirme that which is false in Religion, if so be it turne to the favour thereof.

"The Paynims Religion holds and lifts up their hearts and makes them hardy to enterprise great things: but the Christian Religion, persuading to Humilitie humbleth and too much weakeneth their minds, and so makes them more ready to be iniured and preyed upon.

"The great Doctors of the Christian Religion, by a great ostentation and stiffenesse have sought to abolish the remembrance of all good letters and antiquitie.

"A Prince ought to follow the nature of the Lyon and of the Foxe, yet not of the one without the other.

"A Prince ought not to feare to be periured, to deceive, and dissemble; for the deceiver alwaies finds some that are fit to be deceived.

"A Prince ought to have his mind disposed to turn after every wind and variation of Fortune, that he may know to make use of a vice, when need is."

Such was the completely perverse and diabolical Machiavelli of the popular English tradition, referred to hundreds of times in Elizabethan literature as the incarnation of deceitful wickedness.¹ These references become especially frequent from about 1588 on, as much on account of the popularity of Marlowe's plays, as the political and religious situation to be discussed presently. Marlowe made his great dramatic success with the Machiavellian Tamburlaine, a magnificent hero without a conscience; and he followed it with The Jew of Malta, even more popular, in which Machiavelli appeared as the Prologue, unblushingly admitting all the viciousness imputed to him -- "I count religion but a childish toy" -- and asking that the hero of the play should "not be entertained the worse because he favours me." Marlowe, who, Drayton said, was "bathed in the Thespian springs," and

¹Meyer, op.cit., p. xi, says he collected 395 references to Machiavelli and over 500 to Aretine.

"Had in him those brave translunary things
That the first poets had,"

was able to glorify the Machiavellian hero; he succeeded in making a large English public admire the splendor and virtù of a wicked and pagan character. It is of course difficult to prove the bias of an author from the hero of his play; one must always allow for the necessities of the plot and emotional effect. But every one feels, I think, that the gorgeous pageantry and rich poetic style of Marlowe's plays exceed the requirements of the drama; they are the expression of the author's own pagan tastes and enthusiasms. Marlowe was consequently under suspicion even in his own day. As Courthope says, "Between him and the Puritanic element in the nation the rupture was absolute and complete."¹ That a dramatist so frankly pagan in spirit as Marlowe in these two plays, should be so popular, is indicative of the extent to which Italian culture, even when frankly sceptical, was acceptable in the London of Elizabeth's later years. Shakespeare bowed to the popular taste, and that splendid sinner, the Machiavellian Richard III, dazed the groundlings with his virtù, even though in the end his enemies, aided by "God and our good cause," overcame him.

Nevertheless, the admiration for this Machiavellian stage hero soon passed, and after Marlowe no dramatist tried to arouse it. Outside of the drama Machiavelli seems to have had no champions

¹ Courthope, History of English Poetry, II, 403-ff. The Machiavellism of Marlowe has been much discussed. See: Ulrici, H., Christopher Marlowe und Shakespeare's Verhältniss zu ihm, Shakespeare Jahrbuch, Berlin (1865). I, 57-ff.; Simpson, Richard, Transactions, New Shakespeare Society, (1874), pp. 381 and 424; Storojenko, Life of Greene, in Works of Greene, ed. Grosart, I, 46-ff.; Ward, A. W., English Dramatic Literature, London (1899). I, 339-ff.; Creizenach, W., English Drama in the Age of Shakespeare, Phila. (1916). p. 289.

whatever; Harvey, Nashe and Greene vied with one another in heaping scurrility on him. The term Machiavellian was bandied frequently with no other meaning than that of gross insult. The reason for this animus was not only the Puritan hatred of the immorality and infidelity of the Italianate Englishman, but also a complicated religious and political situation which led the average patriotic Englishman to regard both Papists and Libertines as disciples of Machiavelli, secretly plotting to deliver England into the hands of her Continental enemies. Therefore the legendary Machiavelli, conceived as the type and master of the traitorous English Papist, encountered English national feeling at its height after the defeat of the Armada. Machiavellist, atheist, papist, and traitor, became synonymous terms.

The reason for this development was, in the first place, the illegal position of Catholics in England. Since the Queen had been excommunicated in 1570 and the Catholics had been absolved by the Pope from all allegiance to her, it had become difficult even for the most loyal Catholic to prove that he was not a secret enemy of his country. He could never be trusted. And the natural tendency to suspicion was stimulated by the political activities of the Catholics themselves, whose plots in and out of England were constantly attracting attention. The national feeling aroused thereby expressed itself in the constant readiness of Parliament to vote measures for harassing the Papists. The Queen had in fact to watch her legislators lest they should persecute, and thus alienate, the large number of loyal Catholics who, she knew instinctively, would in a crisis choose allegiance to their Queen rather than to the Pope.

Yet in such a situation the most honest Catholic was forced to dissimulate; technically he was living in a divided allegiance. And his case was made all the worse by the return from Italy every year of a stream of Italianate Englishmen who by their conduct fastened on the papacy the blame for the atheism and immorality imputed generally to Italian life. The shrewd and accurate Ascham early in Elizabeth's reign described the conduct of these travelled Englishmen on their return home.

"Though in Italy," he says, "they may freely be of no religion, as they are in England in very deed too; nevertheless returning home into England, they must countenance the profession of the one or the other, howsoever inwardly they laugh to scorn both. And though for their private matters they can follow, fawn, and flatter noble personages, contrary to them in all respects; yet commonly they ally themselves with the worst papists, to whom they be wedded, and do well agree together in three opinions; in open contempt of God's word, in a secret security of sin, and in a bloody desire to have all taken away by sword and burning, that be not of their faction. They that do read with indifferent judgment Pighius and Machiavel, two indifferent patriarchs of these two religions, do know full well that I say true."¹

This pretence to religion for reasons of policy, whether by a statesman or individual, was always thought to be a mark of discipleship to the Florentine; and this "politic" simulation of religion became a burning question, constantly discussed. Bishop Cooper wrote in 1589 of "certaine worldly and godlesse Epicures, which can pretend religion, and yet passe not which end there of goe forward, so they may bee partakers of that spoyle, which in this alteration is hoped for."² Hooker also feels obliged to refute

¹Ascham, The Schoolmaster, Works, ed. Giles, IV, 162-3.

²Cooper, Thomas, An Admonition, etc., ed. cit. p. 27.

those atheists who see that there is a "politic use of religion" and by it "would also gather that religion itself is a mere politic device, forged purposely to serve for that use"; as the exponent of this theory he refers in a note to Machiavelli.¹ And it was one of the characteristics of the Machiavellian dramatic hero that he should pretend to religion in order to make himself more secure in the practice of his villainy.²

English feeling against these untrustworthy elements in the country became more rather than less acute towards the end of Elizabeth's reign. Jesuit activities, the hostility of Philip II of Spain, plots to attack England by way of Catholic Ireland, all kept the English nervous and ready to strike in self-defense. Some of the important developments of this situation, such as the Gunpowder plot, would carry us beyond the limits of this chapter. But the state of the English mind at the close of the reign of Elizabeth, its paradoxical identification of Catholic and atheist, and passionate hatred of both, is excellently indicated in The Unmasking of the Politike Atheist, a little volume by one John Hull, twice printed in 1602. In the preface to the reader he says:

"The consideration therefore of these lamentable times hath wroong from me this briefe Treatise. Wherein thou maist behold the very map of Papistrie: a doctrine turning the truth of God into a lye, and religion into superstition: perswading men to all ungodlinesse, and yet ouershadowing all with the shew of religion: arming the subiect against the Prince,

¹Hooker Ecclesiastical Polity, Bk. V, ii, 3. Ed.cit.,II, 19-21.

²In Marlowe, ed. Tucker Brooke, see Jew of Malta, ll. 519-ff. and 1550-ff.; Edward the Second, 2387-ff.; The Massacre at Paris, 120-ff. Also Shakespeare's Richard III, Act I, sc.iii, 334-ff. These passages are selected as typical of the many cited throughout the pages of Meyer's monograph.

and yet defends it by the beastly bull of Popish excommunication. Sowing sedition and treasons in the land, yet dare appeare unto the Lords of the Councell as men blamelesse and religious,¹ as did that Machiuillian Turkish practiser (as the Priests of his owne profession doe terme him) Parsons that iugling Jesuite: whereas they meane nothing else, but the utter subuersion of religion and the State, as plainly appeareth by the workes of Sir Francis Hastings and D. Sutliue. Thus are they well practised in Machieuel, turning religion into policie . . . Way then the end of this short treatise, and let us be more thankefull unto God for the riches of his reuealed truth. First it unmaskes the Politicians, that sute religion after the fashion of their policie. Secondly, it forewarnes and so forearmes thee against these popish charmes that now flie about the land, least unwittingly thou be enchanted with them. Thirdly, it gives thee a taste what benefits thou shalt receive by entertaining Papistrie, namely heresie, policie, superstition, Atheisme, and all ungodlinesse. Fourthly, it desciphers unto thee the enuious, murthering, and cruel nature of a right Papist, that hangs his whole religion upon the Popes sleeve. . . Lastly, it armes thee with truth by unfoulding of the contrary, which truth God graunt us to embrace to his glorie, our health, and the countries good . . . "

In the last decade of the sixteenth century, then, Machiavelli was not reputed in England as the exponent of a scientific realpolitik; even the actual readers of his works had their impressions colored by the current representation of him, and could hardly have conceived of him as merely a scientist, who was universally dreaded as the servant of the Spirits of Darkness. "Machiavellism" in the English Renaissance stood first of all for the corrupting influence of Italian paganism; then for the "atheism" of the free thinkers of the period -- mistakenly connected in this way with Anabaptism and other similar sects of the Reformation; and

¹In margin: "See the Spanish Proclamation in Ireland."

finally, for the political treachery of the English papists. That the Machiavellian type should for a moment become a hero in the English drama, shows how completely the theatre was sheltered at that time from the attacks of the Puritan bourgeoisie. For nowhere else in English life were the lines so clearly drawn in the somewhat confused conflict between the Renaissance and the Reformation.¹

VI

The "Atheism" of Marlowe and Raleigh

It must have been noticeable that all the evidence for a sceptical development in the sixteenth century so far presented, with the exception of the testimony at the trials of some luckless Arians, and a few passages from Marlowe, has been gleaned from the writings of the enemies of free thought. Our description of the movement has been from the exterior. In many ways, therefore, it has necessarily been vague. We have not been able to answer some

¹Therefore it seems to me to be a mistake to try to find in Spenser a disciple of Machiavelli, as Professor Greenlaw does; see his article on The Influence of Machiavelli on Spenser, Modern Philology, VII (1909), 187-ff., and especially page 194, where he says that in the Veue Spenser was "trusting to the well-known popularity of Machiavelli's writings at court, as an element in his favor, and incidentally seizing the opportunity of once more defending Lord Gray, this time on the unimpeachable authority of the Italian thinker." This I believe is quite to misunderstand the party alignments in the thought of the English Renaissance. Professor H.S.V. Jones, in Spenser's Defense of Lord Grey (1919), has shown that Spenser's political thought is to be connected with the Huguenot politiques, not with Machiavelli, and comes to the conclusion (p.74) that in their political principles he "can find no sharper antithesis than that between Spenser and Machiavelli."

questions as to the nature of the scepticism current in the latter period of the century, such as, whether it was a serious and scientific doubt, the result of careful study, or merely the insouciance of the pleasure-lover; if the former, whether it was concerned with theology, philosophy, or historical Christianity; and to what extent this scepticism was destructive of the fundamental principles of religion and ethics. Further light will be thrown on these problems in the two succeeding chapters, in connection with the writings of John Donne and Sir John Davies. But we possess also some quite definite information regarding the speculations of two widely reputed "atheists" of the time, Marlowe and Raleigh. It is noteworthy that they were connected with the two chief avenues of the Italian influence, the theatre and the Court. We may perhaps regard their opinions as typical of the inner intellectual life of the "emancipated" Elizabethan.

Contemporary gossip about Marlowe is preserved in two books printed within a few years of his death. In Thomas Beard's Theatre of God's Judgements (1597) we have this account of his opinions on religion: "hee denied God and his sonne Christ, and not onely in word blasphemed the Trinitie, but also (as it is credibly reported) wrote bookes against it, affirming our Sauour to be but a deceiuer, and Moses to be but a coniurer and seducer of the people, and the holy Bible to bee but vaine and idle stories, and all religion but a deuice of policie."¹ Sir William Vaughan, in The Golden Grove (1600), speaks of "one Christopher Marlowe, by profession a play-maker, who, as it is reported, about 14 yeres

¹Quoted by Dyce, Works of Marlowe, London (1865). xxxi.

ago wrote a booke against the Trinitie."¹ Thomas Warton's attempt to minimize this accusation against Marlowe stimulated modern investigation and discussion of the subject.

"Marlowe's wit and sprightliness of conversation," he wrote in his History, "had often the unhappy effect of tempting him to sport with sacred subjects; more perhaps from the preposterous ambition of courting the casual applause of profligate and unprincipled companions, than from any systematic disbelief of religion. His scepticism, whatever it might be, was construed by the prejudiced and peevish Puritans into absolute atheism."²

In his Observations on this History, Joseph Ritson took exception to Warton's apologetic tone, and published from manuscript what he thought was "the strongest (if not the whole) proof that now remains of his (Marlowe's) diabolical tenets, and debauched morals," in the testimony against him by one Richard Baines.³ The assertions imputed to Marlowe by Baines are not marked by serious thought or philosophical value; where they are not obscene, they are merely scoffing. The following are among the more moderate in tone:

"He affirmeth that Moyses was but a Iugler, and that one Heriots being Sir W. Raleighs man, can do more than he."⁴

"That the first beginning of Religion was only to keep men in awe.

"That all protestantes are Hypocriticall asses.

"That if he were putt to write a new religion, he would undertake both a more excellent and Admirable methode. . . ."

The tone of the more virulent remarks may be inferred from the following, quoted from Ritson:

¹Dyce, ed. cit. xxxii.

²Warton, History of English Poetry, ed. Hazlitt, London (1871). IV, 313.

³Ritson, Observations, etc. London (1782). pp. 39-ff. This testimony was reprinted in expurgated form in Dyce's edition of Marlowe, Appendix II; and, again in expurgated form, from the manuscript, by F.S. Boas, in his edition of Kyd, Oxford (1901), pp. cxiii-ff. My first quotations are from Boas.

⁴In a copy made for the Queen, the words being Sir W. Raleighs man were omitted. Boas, p. cxiv.

"That, yf Christ had instituted the Sacraments with more ceremonyall reverence, it would have been had in more admiracion, that it wolde have been much better beinge administred in a Tobacco pype.

"That Christ was a Bastard and his mother dishonest."

Baine's accusations against Marlowe, however, are doubtful evidence. Malone long ago pointed out the following reasons for questioning their veracity: Baines was himself hanged at Tyburn on the 6th of December, 1594, about a year after he submitted this testimony; the testimony was not upon oath; it contains some incredible assertions; Baines was not confronted with the accused, nor was he cross-examined; and finally, there was no corroborative testimony presented.¹

Even more conclusive is the entirely different tone and tenor of such other fragments of direct evidence as have come down to us from Marlowe and the circle about Raleigh. In May, 1593 a search was made by the authorities of the rooms of the dramatist Thomas Kyd, and among his papers was found a fragment of a theological disputation which put him in danger of prosecution for "atheism." A thorough investigation was planned, and Kyd was put to the torture. He declared the papers were Marlowe's, and had been shuffled with his two years before, when the two dramatists had been writing in the same room. Kyd denied any familiarity with "one so irreligious"; declared that he himself was not an atheist, "which some will sweare he (Marlowe) was"; and said that "for more assurance that I was not of that vile opinion, Lett it but please your Lordship to enquire of such as he conversed withall, that is

¹Malone's manuscript notes, quoted by Dyce, Works of Marlowe, ed. cit., p. 389.

(as I am geven to understand) with Harriot, Warner, Royden and some stationers in Paules churchyard."¹ The caution of Kyd's language is to be contrasted with the downrightness of that of Baines. And when we examine the disputation itself, which caused all the investigation, we are struck not only with its moderation, but its reverence in dealing with sacred matters, and its search for the veritable truths of religion in Scripture, "to which sacred fountain," so the fragment concludes,

"iust and right faith ought to cleaue & lean in all controuersies touching religion chefly in this point which seemeth to be the piller & stay of our religion. Wher it is called in question concerning the inuocation of sainctes or expiation of sowles A man may err without great danger in this point being the ground & foundation of our faith we may not err without dammage to owr religion. I call that true religion which instructeth mans minde with right faith & worthy opinion of God And I call that right faith which doth creddit & beleue that of God which the scriptures do testify not in a few places & the same depraued & detort to wrong sense But . . . "

The "pillar and stay" of religion referred to was the conception of the nature of God; and the opinion of the disputant was that ". . . we therfor call God which onlie is worthie this name &c appellation, Euerlasting, Inuisible, Incommutable Incomprehensible Immortall &c." Christ, he therefore held, could not be called God.

This disputation is clearly not atheistical in the modern sense; but it was dangerous doctrine, and its author might have been burned if he had been found. Marlowe was indeed sent for and examined, but his violent death took place only a few days later and no proceedings of the examination have been found to

¹ Kyd's letter and the fragment of the disputation are reprinted by F.S.Boas, Works of Kyd, pp.cviii-cxiii, and discussed by him, pp. lxxiii-ff.

indicate what his connection with this fragment really was.¹ It is probably not his; internal evidence seems rather to indicate that it is "from the pen of some heretical clergyman who was on the eve of suffering some drastic penalty for his opinions."² But Marlowe must have been interested in the ideas expressed, and we may assume that its serious tone made some appeal to the great writer of tragedy. But whatever significance we attach to this fragment, it tends to moderate the testimony of Baines.

We have other corroborative evidence against Baines in the connection of Marlowe with the circle of Raleigh, referred to in 1593 by the Jesuit Parsons as Raleigh's "school of atheism."³ A number of associates were mentioned at various times as members of this circle, but the most prominent or constant was the mathematician Harriot. Anthony a Wood has sketched the beliefs of Harriot, who, he says,

"had strange thought of the scripture, and always undervalued the old story of the creation of the world, and could never believe that trite position, Ex nihilo nihil fit. He made a Philosophical Theology, wherein he cast off the OLD TESTAMENT, so that consequently the NEW would have no foundation. He was a Deist, and his doctrine he did impart . . . to sir Walt. Raleigh when he was compiling the History of the World, and would controvert the matter with eminent divines of those times."⁴

Marlowe's acquaintance with Harriot is clear from the testimony of Baines quoted above, from Kyd's letter, as well as the oldest tradition; and that Marlowe was admitted to the circle about

¹Boas, New Light on Marlowe and Kyd, Fortnightly Review, February 1899.

²Boas, Works of Kyd, p. lxx.

³Nicholas Storojenko's Life of Greene, in Greene's Works, ed. Grosart. I, 35-ff.

⁴Anthony a Wood, Athenae Oxonienses, ed. Bliss, London (1815). II, 300. Query, Was Harriot the author of the disputation?

Raleigh seems established by a letter of a government spy, in which occurs the statement that Marlowe told a certain Cholmeley, a revolutionist as well as "atheist," that "he hath read the Atheist lecture to Sir Walter Raleigh and others."¹

Raleigh's thought on religious matters will therefore help us to form a more accurate notion of the ideas and tone of this "school of atheism," and incidentally also of Marlowe. There is preserved in manuscript a record by Ralph Ironside, of a theological discussion between himself and Carew and Walter Raleigh in the summer of 1593.² "From Ironside's account," says Boas,³ "it is plain that Raleigh's reputation for atheism was gained by his keen and critical analysis of primary religious conceptions like 'God' and 'the soul.' These were doubtless the methods of controversy employed in his 'school,' and daring speculation on such lines may far more plausibly be attributed to Harriott and Marlowe than the crude profanities alleged by Baines." Raleigh the philosopher was certainly as adventurous as the courtier or sea-farer. He was abreast of the new thought of his day. In his History of the World he quotes from Charron, whose book De la Sagesse was first published in 1601.⁴ His posthumous essay Sceptick is a fragmentary account of some of the tropes of the

¹ This letter, discovered by Boas, was published in part in the Fortnightly Review, February, 1899, p. 223. The "Atheist lecture" was probably the treatise against the Trinity, mentioned by Vaughan in the passage quoted above.

² Discussed by J. M. Stone in Month for June, 1894, and by F. S. Boas in Literature, Nos. 147 and 148.

³ Boas, Works of Kyd, p. lxxiii.

⁴ Jusserand, Literary History of the English People, N. Y. (1909). III, 523, n. 2.

Greek sceptics, based directly on Sextus Empiricus.¹ But his study of these sceptical writers had no traceable influence on his ethical ideals. There is nowhere in his work any such protest against convention as Donne expressed in his early poetry; quite the contrary, his orthodox feeling in matters of morality and the conduct of life is eloquent and, we must believe, sincere.² And whatever may have been his questionings in the days of Marlowe, he showed himself at the end of his life capable of genuine religious emotion and confessed himself a penitent Christian who faced death courageously with the faith of a true believer as his support. On account of his past reputation as an atheist, much abuse was heaped on him during his trial both by Coke and Chief Justice Popham;³ but against this must be balanced such first-hand information as Sir John Harrington conveyed in a letter written in 1603 to Dr. Still, Bishop of Bath and Wells:

¹Remains of Sir Walter Raleigh, London (1702). pp.93-105. Jusserand, in his Literary History (III, 523, n.3), speaks of this paper as an original treatise. Upham (French Influence in English Literature, pp.289-292) derives it from Montaigne. I here disagree with these authorities; for the paper follows the argument of Sextus too closely to be derived from Montaigne, and is too full to be taken from Diogenes Laertius. Raleigh may have used the edition of 1562 published by Henri Estienne; but there are traces of an English translation, now lost, which may have been known to him. In 1591 Nashe wrote: "So that our opinion (as Sextus Empiricus affirmeth) giues the name of good or ill to euery thing. Out of whose works (latelie translated into English, for the benefit of unlearned writers) a man might collect a whole booke of this argument. . ." Works, ed. McKerrow, III, 332. Cf. the reference to the "Pironicks," II, 116, and McKerrow's discussion of other borrowings from Sextus, IV, 428-ff.

²The ethical spirit of the History of the World is discussed by Edwards in his Life of Raleigh, I, 538-41. See also Raleigh's thorough disapproval of Machiavelli in his Maxims of State in Remains, ed. cit.

³Edwards, Life of Raleigh, I, 432 and 436; and Jusserand, op. cit., III, 518, n.2.

"I doubt not but some state business is well nigh begun, or to be made out; but these matters pertain not to me now. I much fear for my good lord Grey and Raleigh. I hear the plot was well nigh accomplished to disturb our peace and favor Arabella Stuart, the prince's cousin. The Spaniards bear no good will to Raleigh, and I doubt if some of the English have much better affection toward him: God deliver me from these designs! I have spoken with Carew concerning the matter; he thinketh ill of certain persons whom I know, and wisheth he could gain knowledge and further inspection hereof, touching those who betrayed this business. Cecil doth bear no love to Raleigh, as you well understand, in the matter of Essex. I wist not that he hath evil design in matter of faith or religion. As he hath often discoursed to me with much learning, wisdom and freedom, I know he doth somewhat differ in opinion from some others; but I think also his heart is well fixed in every honest thing, as far as I can look into him. He seemeth wondrously fitted, both by art and nature to serve the state; especially as he is versed in foreign matters, his skill therein being always estimable and praiseworthy. In religion he hath shown (in private talk) great depth and good reading, as I once experienced at his own house, before many learned men. In good troth, I pity his state, and doubt the dice not fairly thrown, if his life be the losing stake . . ."¹

But though all this evidence has indicated a sobriety in the thought of Marlowe and Raleigh which their enemies did not credit them with, yet we can not reject the blasphemous remarks recorded by Baines as entirely without foundation. There were many irreligious witticisms in circulation at the time, and Marlowe may have spoken them freely among his intimates during their carousals. The Bohemianism of the time was a serious enough danger to attract attention. Hooker speaks of it as something new.

"Now because that judicious learning," he says, in his discussion of atheism, "for which we commend

¹Nugae Antiquae, I, 340. Quoted in Aikin's Memoirs of the Court of King James the First, London (1822). I, 340.

most worthily the ancient sages of the world, doth not in this case serve the turn, these trencher-mates (for such the most of them be) frame to themselves a way more pleasant; a new method they have of turning things that are serious into mockery, an art of contradiction by way of scorn, a learning wherewith we were long sithence forewarned that the miserable times whereinto we are fallen should abound. This they study, this they practise, this they grace with a wanton superfluity of wit, too much insulting over the patience of more virtuously disposed minds."¹

And Bacon places among his four reasons for the spread of atheism, the "custom of profane scoffing in holy matters, which doth, by little and little, deface the reverence of religion."² The Lucianic and Rabelaisian strain in the liberal culture of the Renaissance was as conspicuous among the esprits forts of London as of Paris, and Marlowe was probably not untouched by it.

But it is dangerous to rely too much on such irreverent and blasphemous wit for our conceptions of the state of sceptical thought in the sixteenth century; we must not look for the intellectual milieu of the eighteenth century in the earlier age. The reputed atheists turn out, on closer examination, to be anything but atheists. Marlowe, we find, was interested in a discourse on the nature of God, as revealed by Scripture; Raleigh's keen and inquisitive mind faced all the intellectual problems of his day, but was probably never even thoroughly Arian. Bacon said that atheists are rare. In the sixteenth century, certainly, it was not easy to doubt consistently and completely the doctrines of

¹Hooker, Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity. Book V, II, 2. ed. cit. II, 18.

²Bacon, Essays, no. xvi. ed. West, p. 48.

Christianity; the hazard was far greater than today. The unbeliever of that time did not occupy such an impregnable citadel as has been constructed for the modern sceptic by science and the higher criticism. He was a wanderer in strange, uncharted lands, an outlaw, the champion of a precarious cause. Many a man who set out with a stout heart, had misgivings and turned back before he had gone very far. Antecedent probability was against him. Pascal's gamble, which to us seems merely insincere bargaining, was to him a terrifying dilemma.¹

Moreover, the popular mind was still enveloped in medieval superstition. Whatever his reason may have told him in the security of good fellowship, the man of the sixteenth century was instinctively and unavoidably afraid of the dark when alone. He was ridden with the hagiology and thaumaturgy, the crudest anthropomorphic conception of evil spirits, such as flourishes among the ignorant, but which he believed on the learned authority of the medieval Christian church.² Even when his reason was free, his instinctive, emotional and imaginative life was still in bondage. This half-emancipation from medievalism explains many of the sudden conversions of Arians after being arrested and threatened with death. It is the paradox of Hamlet -- the inconsistency between the great soliloquy and the previous appearance of the

¹This explains partly the ludicrous ease with which Euphues, for instance, is able to convert Atheos in Lyly's story (*Works*, ed. Bond. I, 291-ff.). Atheos is not convinced; he is terrified.

²Lecky, W. E. H., Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe, 3rd ed., London (1866). I, chap. i. On Magic and Witchcraft.

ghost; also of Faustus, who argues with the devil against the reality of hell. In no great creative work of northern Europe is the persistence of the Middle Ages in the imaginative life of the Renaissance more powerfully depicted than in Marlowe's Faustus. The Faust legend has become, since Goethe, symbolical of the meeting of Medievalism and the Renaissance; it has acquired a more philosophical significance than it could have had for Marlowe. But Marlowe, like the Lutheran who wrote the earlier German prose tale, regarded the conjuring of Faustus as a denial of the truths of religion for the sake of indulgence in the aesthetic and physical life of the senses; Faust was the popular, ignorant, medieval conception of the educated, pagan type of the Renaissance. Marlowe makes Faustus a sceptic and a pagan even before his contract with the devil.

Fau. Did not my coniuring speeches raise thee? speake.

Me. That was the cause, but yet per accident,
For when we heare one racke the name of God,
Abiure the scriptures, and his Sauour Christ,
Wee flye, in hope to get his glorious soule,
Nor will we come, vnlesse he vse such meanes
Whereby he is in danger to be damnd:
Therefore the shortest cut for coniuring
Is stoutly to abiure the Trinitie,
And pray deuoutly to the prince of hell.

Fau. So Faustus hath
Already done, & holds this principle,
There is no chiefe but onely Belsibub,
To whom Faustus doth dedicate himselfe,
This word damnation terrifies not him,
For he confounds hell in Elizium.¹
His ghost be with the old Philosophers.¹

But if Faustus began as a sceptic, he died a firm believer, converted by his terrified imagination. The moral of the play, as the

¹Works of Marlowe, ed. Brooke, Tucker, Oxford (1910). pp. 154-5.

Chorus informs us, is not to wander beyond the prescribed bounds; and into the powerful conclusion, lit up here and there by flashes of insight which suggest even to the modern reader that the conflict within Faustus involves something more than superstition -- into this conclusion Marlowe put the doubt, the terror, the sensitiveness to the Medieval world as well as to the Renaissance, from which as yet even the best minds were not free.

If we remember this hold of Medievalism on the intellect and imagination of even the "emancipated" Englishman of the Renaissance, we shall not make the error, in looking back over the sceptical developments in the England of the sixteenth century, of expecting to find the serene, hard, materialistic and sensual unbelief of Italy.¹ Scepticism was too new, too foreign, and encountered too much opposition in England to run its course so quickly; its full development belongs to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But we have found in the sixteenth century a universal awakening of a moderate sceptical spirit. Early in the century Arianism was wide-spread, a doubt as to the Trinity and the divinity of Christ, combined with a devout belief in God; this Arianism was repressed by the writ de haeretico comburendo, but it could never be extinguished; and towards the end of the century it was reinforced by the paganism of Italy, a new culture which tended to liberate the imagination from Medievalism, and therefore often took the form of scoffing, even of blasphemy; finally, we have

¹Cf. Symonds, Shakespeare's Predecessors, London (1906). pp. 507-ff. Lee, Vernon, Euphorion, London (1899). The Italy of the Elizabethan Dramatists. pp. 55-108.

noted traces of a new philosophical activity, a study of Greek scepticism in Sextus Empiricus. The study of these intellectual forces and sceptical tendencies helps us to form a more definite conception of the "atheism" of Marlowe and Raleigh. Although we can probably never know precisely how far their scepticism dared to go, the presumption must be, especially as regards Raleigh, that it never became a complete atheism; Marlowe may have spoken without restraint whatever irreverent thoughts occurred to him over his cups, and in the hectic state of the time such remarks were likely to assume an exaggerated importance; and as for the serious-minded Raleigh, it is unlikely that his reputed "atheism" was more than that Arianism which had so constantly kept reappearing and troubling the ecclesiastics of the sixteenth century. Raleigh was one of the most notable representatives of the enlightenment and emancipatory spirit of his age; but this whole process of emancipation, as we have seen, was related to the Reformation as well as to the Renaissance; and liberal thought in England, from Colet to Raleigh, was in general marked by seriousness and an awareness of the ethical and religious needs of human nature. In short, the sceptical tendencies in England in the sixteenth century partook of the individualism of the Renaissance and Reformation, of the dissenting spirit of the native of Britain, of his ethical temper, and of the paganism of Italian culture. The sixteenth century was a period of many and complex beginnings; and in these various manifestations of the sceptical temper, we have the beginnings in English literature and life, of the modern intellect and imagination.

CHAPTER THREE

SCEPTICISM AND NATURALISM IN DONNE'S EARLY VERSE

I. The Sceptical Thought of Donne.- II. The Stoic Formulation of the Law of Nature.- III. A Renaissance Discussion of the Law of Nature.- IV. The "Libertine" Appeal to Nature. V. Scepticism and Naturalism in Montaigne.- VI. Continuations in the Seventeenth Century.

Few subjects of biography are more fascinating than John Donne. A man of the Renaissance, aristocratic, fastidious, distinguished not only for his great talents but for a unique and rare poetic nature, and ambitious for a secular career, Donne closed the doors to promotion by his secret marriage; and after years of privation and anxiety, he took orders and became in his last years one of England's greatest and most saintly divines. The apparent inconsistency in the career of the man who wrote the Elegies as well as the Hymn to God the Father, only entices one the more to penetrate, if possible, into the innermost secret of his development. However elusive it may be, one feels that there must be some principle of continuity in the intellectual and spiritual history of Donne, some deeper impulse or characteristic which manifested itself in diverse ways. The ten years before his marriage, of London life, Continental travel and sea adventure, years filled with "the queasy pain of being beloved and loving,"¹ as well as with "the worst voluptuousness, which is an hydroptic,

¹Donne, John, The Calm, ll. 40-41.

immoderate desire of human learning and languages",¹ must have some significance even in a study of the preacher and religious poet. To the solution of this difficult and delicate problem, ignored by his first biographer, Walton, modern scholarship has made important contributions.

The most striking quality of Donne's earlier poems is their scepticism. Courthope has noted in this connection the "Pyrrhonism" of the Renaissance in general, and attempted to explain by reference to it the peculiar style of the metaphysical poets.² He devoted several pages also to showing that Donne was in his youth a "sceptic in religion" and a "revolutionist in love."³ But Courthope saw no connection between the scepticism of Donne's youth and his later career; he seems to regard Donne's marriage as bringing about a complete change of heart and a break with his mental past. Grierson, however, thinks that "the truth is rather that, owing to the fullness of Donne's experience as a lover, the accident that made of the earlier libertine a devoted lover and husband, and from the play of his restless and subtle mind on the phenomenon of love conceived and realized in this less ideal fashion, there emerged in his poetry the suggestion of a new philosophy of love which, if less transcendental than that of Dante, rests on a juster, because a less dualistic and ascetic, conception of the nature of the love of man and woman."⁴ Of Donne's early scepticism, likewise,

¹ Donne's letter to Sir H. Goodyer, in Gosse's Life and Letters of John Donne, London (1899). I, 191.

² Courthope, Hist. of Eng. Poetry. III, 147-8.

³ Op. cit. III, 150-156.

⁴ Donne's Poetical Works, ed. Grierson. II, xxxv.

Grierson finds a continued influence in his mature poetic effort, represented by the Anniversaries, and even in his manner of accepting Anglicanism after he had taken orders.¹

Grierson's general conception of the life of Donne seems to me to be the juster, and my own studies are in the main a corroboration of it. In another chapter I shall discuss, more fully than Grierson has done, the significance of the sceptical strain in Donne's religious development. The present chapter will be confined to a study of the youthful Donne as a "revolutionist in love," to a more thorough analysis than has yet been presented of his audacious and singularly modern philosophy of that subject, and a discussion of some similar developments of thought in the Renaissance with which Donne may have been acquainted.

I

The Sceptical Thought of Donne

A whole class of Donne's Songs and Sonnets is devoted to witty exposition of the belief that inconstancy is the only constant element in love. Paradox and hyperbole seem inexhaustible to this adroit, gay and heart-whole cynic, and nowhere in Donne's work do they seem more appropriate to the tone and subject of the verse. As we open the volume we come almost at the beginning upon the celebration of this idea in a Song. Search the world for its wonders, runs the burden of this "song," and when you return you

¹Op. cit. II, 187-8 and 235-6.

will swear that "nowhere lives a woman true, and fair." The reader feels that hyperbole has been exhausted and nothing more can be said; but Donne has only prepared for a more ingenious and audacious climax. If you should find one, he continues, let him know -- "such a Pilgrimage were sweet." Yet, on reflecting, he would not go even to the next door to meet a woman reputed constant, for

"Though she were true, when you met her,
And last, till you write your letter,
Yet shee
Will bee
False, ere I come, to two, or three."

He expresses no bitterness towards women on this score -- he boasts, rather, that he can equal them in fickleness. He addresses a new mistress:

"Now thou hast loved me one whole day,
To morrow when thou leav'st, what wilt thou say?"

She will, he says, on the morrow be making excuses for a change in her affections. He anticipates her, he recounts the excuses, but he will not protest.

"Vaine lunatique, against these scapes I could
Dispute, and conquer, if I would,
Which I abstaine to doe,
For by to morrow, I may thinke so too."¹

Such verses may of course be merely the product of a lighter mood; but in Donne this mood recurs again and again, and often with a good deal of reflective thought and a set doctrine. In The Indifferent his protests against a woman's desire for con-

¹Donne, ed. cit. I, 9.

stancy in her lover are overheard by Venus, who indignantly investigates and chastises these "poor heretics"

"Which thinke to stablish dangerous constancie."¹

That this inconstant love is mere ranging physical appetite, he frankly recognizes in Loves Usury.² But Donne does not for that reason condemn it; quite the contrary, his appeal is ever to Nature for the justification of a frankly sensual conception of love. He draws a frequent parallel between love and the other appetites, or between the habits of mankind and beasts -- or nature. Thus in Confined Love he asks,

"Are Sunne, Moone, or Starres by law forbidden,
To smile where they list, or lend away their light?
Are birds divorc'd, or are they chidden
If they leave their mate, or lie abroad a night?
Beasts do no joyntures lose
Though they new lovers choose,
But we are made worse then those."³

In the third Elegy, called Change, he develops the same idea with less hyperbole and gayety. Donne is not here putting his cleverness to a test, but rather seriously examining the philosophy of Change and pronouncing it true.

"Waters stincke soone, if in one place they bide,
And in the vast sea are more putrifi'd:
But when they kisse one banke, and leaving this
Never looke backe, but the next banke doe kisse,
Then are they purest; Change is the nursery
Of musicke, joy, life, and eternity."⁴

To Donne, says Courthope, "love, in its infinite variety and inconsistency, represented the principle of perpetual flux in Nature."⁵

¹Donne, ed. cit. I, 13.

²Idem, I, 13.

³Idem. I, 36. Cf. Communitie, p. 32; and Farewell to love, pp. 70-1.

⁴Idem. I, 83.

⁵Courthope, Hist. of Eng. Poetry. III, 154.

But Courthope's statement of the theories of this revolutionist is incomplete. For this conception of inconstancy in love as natural and normal is not alone an adequate statement of Donne's thought, nor is it sufficient to indicate Donne's relation to the currents of thought in the Renaissance. Donne's Naturalism can not be understood apart from his Scepticism, which makes it possible. His appeal to Nature as a guide and norm is a substitute, as he himself makes very clear, for the authority of society and its accepted code of morality, which he calls "Custom" and "Opinion." He suggests humorously what we should call a Nietzschean explanation of the social code:

"Some man unworthy to be possessor
 Of old or new love, himselfe being false or weake,
 Thought his paine and shame would be lesser,
 If on womankind he might his anger wreake,
 And thence a law did grow,
 One might but one man know;
 But are other creatures so?"¹

He repeats and amplifies this sceptical theory in Elegie XVII,

Variety:

"How happy were our Syres in ancient times,
 Who held plurality of loves no crime!
 With them it was accounted charity
 To stirre up race of all indifferently;
 Kindreds were not exempted from the bands:
 Which with the Persian still in usage stands.
 Women were then no sooner asked then won,
 And what they did was honest and well done.
 But since this title honour hath been us'd,
 Our weake credulity hath been abus'd;
 The golden laws of nature are repeal'd,
 Which our first Fathers in such reverence held;
 Our liberty's revers'd, our Charter's gone,
 And we're made servants to opinion,
 A monster in no certain shape attir'd,
 And whose originall is much desir'd,
 Formlesse at first, but goeing on it fashions,

¹Donne, ed. cit. I, 36.

And doth prescribe manners and laws to nations.
 Here love receiv'd immedicable harmes,
 And was dispoiled of his daring armes . . .
 Only some few strong in themselves and free
 Retain the seeds of antient liberty,
 Following that part of Love although deprest,
 And make a throne for him within their brest,
 In spite of modern censures him avowing
 Their Sovereigne, all service him allowing."¹

The whole thought of this passage is based on the contrast and opposition between the "golden laws of Nature" and "opinion," which "prescribes manners and laws to nations." Donne has somewhere come in contact with a sceptical and relativist philosophy and been profoundly impressed by it. He recurs to it at the conclusion of his satire The Progresse of the Soule:

"There's nothing simply good, nor ill alone,
 Of every quality comparison,
 The onely measure is, and judge, opinion."²

In these light and cynical poems of the young student and courtier, what is significant for our purposes is not so much their tone as their constantly recurring ideas -- we may even say, doctrines. Whether Donne would ever at any time have been willing to write a learned defense of them is somewhat beside our purpose; for whether he held them seriously or not, they certainly fascinated him, and they give us a clue as to some unsuspected lines of study and thinking of the young man who, according to Walton, was reading Bellarmine in his preparation for a decision between Catholicism and Anglicanism. For these poems, grave and gay, are learned; their sceptical reflections are the fruit of study.

¹Idem. I, 114-5. Compare The Progresse of the Soule, stanzas xx and xxi.

²Idem. I, 316.

A re-statement of the principles involved will show more clearly the doctrinal nature of this revolutionary poetry. At least three such principles may be distinctly formulated: First, love is a purely physical relation, an appetite; second, its justification is Natural Law -- not the universal Law of Nature, Jus naturale, which was then usually understood to be the basis of the moral code, but the "natural" condition of liberty, of change, the "natural" freedom from the restraints of society; third, the restraints of society have no justification; the social code, which pretends to absolute validity and rightness, is merely the result of custom, and its sacredness is merely "opinion."

John Donne was learned in the law, and he knew well that he was reversing the theory of the Law of Nature, Jus naturale, the fundamental and central doctrine of political thought and social ethics in Europe from the Stoics and Cicero through the Renaissance. And when Donne expressed his sceptical ideas in verse, his readers must have been aware of his audacity; no doubt they derived some degree of pleasure from observing the ingenuity of Donne, precisely because they knew his attack was directed against a great tradition. It must be part of our excuse for a long examination of this tradition, that after our study we shall better appreciate the play of John Donne's wit.

II

The Stoic Formulation of the Law of Nature

It is impossible, and fortunately unnecessary, to give here a history of the concept of Natural Law in the philosophy of politics, of morals, and of religion. The literature on the subject is extensive.¹ What is here attempted is merely a sketch of some of the main developments of it in ancient and medieval thought, so as to explain the importance and general application of the theory of the Law of Nature in the Renaissance. At the same time, I shall briefly discuss certain sceptical theories which appeared both in antiquity and the Middle Ages, philosophies of revolt and individualism, which, of little consequence perhaps in their own day, produced a more plentiful crop in the fertile seed-bed of the Renaissance.

Natural Law as the basis of ethics was first taught by the Stoics. They felt the inadequacy of the theory of the Epicureans, that pleasure, refined and temperate perhaps, but nevertheless pleasure, voluptas, is the final and supreme value in life. It is inadequate even to justify the moral conduct of Epicurus himself, who died happy in spite of all his bodily pain.²

¹Voigt, Moritz, Die Lehre vom ius naturale, aequum et bonum und ius gentium der Römer, 4 vols., Leipzig (1856); Janet, Paul, Histoire de la Science Politique, 4th ed., Paris (1913); Gierke, Otto, Political Theories of the Middle Age, trans. Maitland, Cambridge (1900); Figgis, J.N., From Gerson to Grotius, Cambridge (1907); Dunning, W.A., History of Political Theories, Ancient and Medieval, N.Y. (1902); Carlyle, R.W., and A.J., History of Medieval Political Theory, N.Y. (1903-16); Troeltsch, Ernst, Das stoischchristliche Naturrecht und das moderne profane Naturrecht, Historische Zeitschrift, vol. 106 (1911), 237-267.

²Cicero, De Finibus. Book II, 30.

The Stoics could see in this doctrine of "pleasure" only calculating utilitarianism, selfish hedonism, and a dangerous and degrading blunting of the moral sense. They charged the Epicureans with reducing virtue to craftiness, and morality to skill in supplying oneself with bodily satisfactions. The Stoics, to their merit, kept themselves ever aware of the universal and imperative nature of the ethical sense, and, scorning the moral anarchy which they pointed out in Epicurean thought, tenaciously held that virtue is its own justification and the chief aim of every wise man.¹

Virtue, then, the Stoics taught, is founded on such principles as constitute the eternal and immutable Law of Nature. All good men obey this Law, the wicked ignore it; but he who violates it, violates his own nature and suffers inevitably the most severe penalties, even though he escape unpunished by the state. This Law is clear to all, -- written in our own nature. It needs no expositor or interpreter. No senate or people can abrogate it; nor does it vary from one country to another, but in Rome, in Athens, to-day and to-morrow and forever, this law remains, one and eternal and immutable.² Justice is but an expression of this Law of Nature. The authority of law is therefore not derived from the edict of the praetor or from the Twelve Tables, but is that highest reason, innate in our nature, which prescribes what we must do and warns us against the contrary.³

On the one side, therefore, the Stoics defended the validity of the moral judgment against the Epicureans; but they

¹Cicero's elaborate refutation of Epicurean ethics in De Finibus, Book II, is based on Stoic doctrine.

²Lactantius, Div. Inst. VI, 8; Cicero, De Re Publica, III, 23.

³Cicero, De Legibus, Book I, 5-6.

also had to contend on the other with the Sceptics. Cicero, whom we have been following in our exposition of these philosophical conflicts of antiquity, shared with the Stoics their antipathy for both schools. His comments on the Sceptics, although come down to us in rather fragmentary form, are nevertheless sufficient for our purpose. They make it clear enough that Cicero had little regard for the philosophy which denied that truth is attainable, and which above all, maintained that we can not be sure what virtue and justice is, but can at best resignedly take custom for our guide. There is no subject, he says, generally discussed by the learned, more important to understand thoroughly than that we are born for justice, and that law is established, not by "opinion," but by "nature."¹ To think that the difference between virtue and vice resides in opinion only, and not in nature, is idiotic.² It is imperative that the "good" should be something praiseworthy in itself. Goodness is not a matter of opinion, but of nature. For it would be absurd to say that happiness is merely the effect of opinion; ethical questions must be referred for solution to the deepest and firmest principles, the Law of Nature.³ None of the sceptical philosophers is mentioned more often by Cicero than Carneades, who first brought the Greek sceptical philosophy to Rome

¹Cicero, De Legibus. I, 10. "Sed omnium, quae in hominum doctorum disputatione versantur, nihil est profecto praestabilius, quam plane intellegi, nos ad iustitiam esse natos, neque opinione, sed natura constitutum esse ius."

²De Legibus. I, 16. Haec autem in opinione existimare, non in natura posita, dementis est.

³De Legibus. I, 17. Quod bonum est, in se habeat quod laudetur necesse est. Ipsum enim bonum non est opinionibus, sed natura. Nam ni ita esset, beati quoque opinione essent: quo quid dici potest stultius? Quare quum et bonum et malum natura iudicetur, et ea sint principia naturae: certe honesta quoque et turpia simili ratione iudicanda, et ad naturam referenda sunt.

with such brilliance and scandal in the year 158. Cicero's summary of his philosophy has been preserved by Lactantius, and gives in a paragraph the tone and doctrine of the Sceptics: Men have established laws among themselves, Carneades said, merely because of their utility, and therefore have varied them from time to time, as well as from country to country. But no universal principle underlies them -- there is no Law of Nature. There is another "nature" than the Stoics referred to, which guides all men and other animals to their own advantage. But this "nature" does not teach men that justice is the end and aim of life; for there is no justice. If there were, a man might seek the welfare of others to his own detriment, which would be the extremest folly.¹

The Sceptics, therefore, agreed with the Epicureans in denying the ethical sense, or moral judgment. But whereas the Epicureans established the dogmatism of pleasure as an end, the Sceptics taught that the final aim and value of life is unknowable, and that we can at best accept an unphilosophical utilitarianism or the custom of the country as our best guides in conduct. The social code, said the Sceptics, has no basis in absolute right or justice, or in Nature conceived as universal reason, but is the varying creation of man, the sacredness of which is mere "opinion."

¹ Carneades summa disputationis haec fuit: Iura sibi homines pro utilitate sanxisse, scilicet varia pro moribus, et apud eosdem pro temporibus saepe mutata; ius autem naturale esse nullum. Omnes et homines et alias animantes ad utilitates suas natura ducente ferri; proinde aut nullam esse iustitiam, aut si sit aliqua, summam esse stultitiam, quoniam sibi noceret, alienis commodis consulent. Lactantius, Div. Inst. V, 16; Cicero, De Re Publica, III, 12.

In the philosophical debate which is briefly summarized in these passages from Cicero, the theory of the Law of Nature was developed and its terminology fixed for centuries.¹ Certain analogies are already observable with the ideas with which Donne was occupied when he wrote his early verse. We have in ancient scepticism the same disrespect for the social code, the same reference to "opinion." But we note also in Donne a difference in the conception of Nature; he refers constantly to nature, not as a source of such universal and rational principles as should check or guide desires, but as the justification of individual desires, as the denial of all universal moral law. This degraded conception of "nature" is only faintly foreshadowed in the use of the term "nature" by Carneades in the passage cited above; it was not a development of ancient thought. We shall find something similar to it in the later Middle Ages, and several analogous developments in the Renaissance.

III

A Renaissance Discussion of the Law of Nature

Dissent from the doctrine of the Law of Nature became, however, a far more difficult and serious matter in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance than in the centuries between Plato and Cicero. The ancient Sceptics had contended only with professional rivals, though even so they had a dubious reputation, especially amid the

¹For an account of the jus naturale before Cicero, see Voigt, op. cit. I, 76-212.

unspeculative respectability of the Roman republic. But after Cicero the theory of the Law of Nature was elaborated by Seneca, the Roman Jurists of the Empire, the early Christian Fathers, and St. Augustine, until at last the encyclopedic mind of Thomas Aquinas combined the vague and often conflicting ideas of his many predecessors into one all-embracing system which dominated speculation on the subject in the following centuries. With all this discussion the idea grew in importance, until in the Renaissance it was regularly appealed to as the basic principle in law, in ethics, in natural theology, -- in short, as the one philosophical defense of the worthiest and most ideal elements of civilization. The Law of Nature thus became a conservative and stabilizing doctrine in Renaissance thought, a bulwark against excessive individualism, whether in the form of tyranny on the one hand or of absolute anarchy on the other. "It is not an accident," says Figgis, "that men like Machiavelli, and Hobbes, whose aim is to remove all restraints from the action of rulers except those of expediency, should be agreed in denying all meaning to the idea of natural law."¹ Bodin, on the contrary, who was the greatest opponent in the Renaissance of the political thought of Machiavelli, based his whole philosophy on the orthodox tradition.² The relation of natural law to political ethics was therefore an important crux in the thought of the Renaissance, the meeting point of Machiavellianism

¹Figgis, op. cit., p.8.

²Dunning, From Luther to Montesquieu, p.85. Also Baudrillart, Henri, J. Bodin et son Temps, Paris (1853). pp. 222-ff. On the same difference between Machiavelli and Grotius, see Figgis, op. cit., p.88.

and other forms of "libertine" thought with tradition and conservatism, reinforced by the general revival of Stoicism. As a consequence, two camps were formed, those who adhered to traditional thought and affirmed the existence of a Law of Nature, and those who were sceptical and leaned towards various forms of anarchic individualism.

With this brief statement of the situation in mind, we may examine a document of the English Renaissance, which summarizes the theory of the Law of Nature and defends it against sceptical attacks, a passage in an imaginary dialogue between Cardinal Pole and Sir Thomas Lupset, written about 1536 or 1538 by Thomas Starkey, but unpublished until the nineteenth century.¹ Starkey, who occupied a position at court as chaplain and as confidential agent of Henry VIII in his negotiations with Cardinal Pole, had acquired a thorough humanistic education, having studied, according to his own account, philosophy, Latin and Greek at Oxford, and "natural Knowledge," divinity and civil law for several years in Italy.² His discussion of the Law of Nature is therefore to be accepted as authoritative and representative, and both his ideas and terminology are worth close scrutiny.

Lupset is made the expositor of the ideas of the author, whereas the Cardinal is given the ungrateful role of advocatus diaboli, urging the objections that have to be met at each step. The dialogue opens with Lupset advising Pole to apply his learning and talents to the assistance of the commonwealth. Pole first takes

¹England in the Reign of King Henry the Eighth, ed. J.M. Cowper, E.E.T.S., London (1878).

²Letter to Cromwell, quoted in Introduction, p.x.

refuge in the theory that the contemplative life is higher than the active; but Lupset confutes him by appealing to Aristotle, who blamed the philosophers for not making better the lives of others. Pole then draws an argument from the legend of the Golden Age, that man is not born to a social and political life, society and its duties being only the result of the corruption of mankind. Lupset replies that it is the duty of such men as Pole to counteract this corruption and help restore justice in the world. The real argument then begins, over the problem of finding a philosophical conception of a just civil life and political order.

The sceptical Pole fears that our political ideal is merely "as hyt were, a conspiracy in honesty and vertue, stablyschyd by commyn assent." For the Turk, the Jew, and the Saracen, as well as the Christian, maintains that his own manner of life is the most "agreabul to reson and nature as a thyng con-fyrmyd by Goddys owne dyuynyte. So that by thys mean hyt apperyth al stondyth in the jugement and opynyon of man, in so much that wych ys the veray true polytyke and cyuyle lyfe, no man surely by your dyffynytyon can affyrme wyth any certaynty."¹

Lupset acknowledges that "thys ys no smal dowte to some men." And in his further remarks, one suspects an allusion to materialistic and sceptical tendencies which Starkey must have met with in Italy, perhaps to the recent works of Machiavelli. For, Lupset continues,

"bycause suche ther be wych couertly take away al cyuylte, and wold bryng al to confusyon and tyranny, saying ther ys no dyfference betwyn

¹Op. cit., p.11.

vyce and vertue but strong opynyon, and that al such thyngys hang of the folysch fansy and jugement of man; I schal fyrst schow you how vertue stondyth by nature and not only by the opynyon of man; and second how and by what mean thvs folysch opynyon cam in to thos lyght braynys."¹

In fulfilling his first promise, Lupset points to the excellence and dignity of man, his mastery over beasts, and his arts which reveal the divinity that is innate in him. But this celestial and divine nature of man is expressed also in the universal recognition of such virtues as temperance and courage, and in the rooted reverence for God which is "in al men by nature, wythout any other instructyon."

"Thes vertues, and other lyke, whereby man, of nature meke, gentyl, and ful of humanyte, ys inclynyed and sterryd to cyuyle ordur and louyng cumpany, wyth honeste behauyour both toward God and man, are by the power of nature in the hart of man rotyd and plantyd, and by no vayn opynyon or fansy conceyued."²

Many there are who live in disregard of this divine excellence of their nature, but they suffer constant disapproval from their conscience.

"For they have rotyd in theyr hartys a certain rule, euer repugnyng to theyr maner of lyfyng, wych they, by necligente incontynence, suffer to be corrupt; the wych rule, so certayn and so stabul, ys callyd of phylosopharys and wyse men, the unyuersal and true law of nature, wych to al natyonys ys commyn, no thyng hangyng of the opynyon and folysch fansy of man. In so much that yf man, by corrupt jugement, wold extyme vertue as vyce, no thyng regardyng hys owne dygnyte, yet vertues, by theyr owne nature, be no les vertues, nor mynyschyd of theyr excellency, by any such frantye fansy; no more than yf al men togyder wold conspyre that there were no God, who by that folysch opynyon schold no thyng be mynysched of hys hys maiesty, or yf they

¹Op. cit. p.11.

²Op. cit. p.14.

wold say that he nother gouernyth nor rulyth thys world, yet theyr opynyon makyth no les hys hys prouydence."¹

After establishing, to his own and the Cardinal's satisfaction, the eternal and immutable character of the Law of Nature, Lupset still has the variations in laws and customs and ethical feeling to explain. He therefore distinguishes, as political theory had done before him from the Romans down, between the divine and absolute Law of Nature and the human and changeable Civil Law. The natural impulses need the aid of man, the assistance and protection of government and institutions.

"Wherfor amonge al men and al natyonys, as I thynk, apon erth, ther be, and euer hathe byn, other certayn custumys and manerys by long use and tyme conformyd and approuyd; other lawys wryten and deuysyd by the polytyke wytte of man receyuyd and stablyschyd for the mayntenaunce and setting forward of ther natural sedys and plantys of vertue; wych custume and law by man so ordeynyd and deuysyd ys callyd the cyuyle law, for bycause they be as meanys to bryng man to the perfectyon of the cyuyle lyfe; wythout the ordynance of thes lawys, the other sone wylbe corrupt, the wedys wyl sone ouergrow the gud corne. Thys law cyuyle is fer dyfferent from the other; for in euery cuntrey hyt ys dyuerse and varyabul, ye almost in euery cyte and towne. Thys law takyth effecte of the opynyon of man, hyt restyth holly in hys consent, and varyth accordyng to the place and tyme, in so much that in dyuerse tyme and place contrary lawys are both gud, and both conuenient to the polytyke lyfe. Wher as the law of nature ys euer one, in al cuntreys fyrme and stabul, and neuer for the tyme varyth; hyt ys neuer chaungeabul; the consent of man doth no thyng therto; hyt hangyth no thyng of tyme nor place, but accordyng as ryght reson ys euer one, so ys thys law, and neuer varyth aftur the fansy of man."²

Lupset encounters the old difficulty of the political theorists before him when he begins to illustrate his general

¹Op. cit. p. 14.

²Op. cit. pp. 15-16.

principles. For there was no unanimity of opinion as to the exact line of demarcation between the Law of Nature and the Civil Law. Lupset, in fact, is very tolerant and inclusive in selecting his illustrations of such laws as are "binding only on those who receive them."

"As to absteyn from flesch apon the Fryday," he says, "wyth us hyt ys now reputyd a certayn vertue, wyth the Turkys no thyng so; prestys to lyue chast, wyth us hyt ys a certayn vertue and honesty, wyth the Grekys hyt ys no thyng so; to mary but one wyfe, wyth us hyt ys a certayn vertue also, wyth other natyonys, as Turkys, Morys, and Sarasyns, hyt ys no thyng so."¹

In principle, however, Civil Law should always be based on the Law of Nature, to which it is merely the aid. For, he says,

"thys law ys the ground and end of the other, to the wych hyt must euer be referryd, non other wyse then the conclusyonys of artys mathematical are euer referryd to theyr pryncypullys. For cyuyle ordynance ys but as a mean to bryng man to observe thys law of nature, in so much that, yf ther be any cyuyle law ordeynyd wych can not be resoluyd therto, hyt ys of no value; for al gud cyuyle lawys spryng and yssue out of the law of nature, as brokys and ryuerys out of fountaynys and welllys."²

In reading this brief Renaissance dialogue on political ethics, we note the essential coincidence in ideas and terminology with the discussions of the ancient Stoics, as represented by Cicero; except that the Stoics contended chiefly with the Epicureans, whereas Starkey directs his polemics exclusively at scepticism and moral anarchy. This change of emphasis is significant; it indicates the

¹Op. cit. p.17.

²Op. cit. p.16. Hooker discusses the distinction between the universality of the "Law of Nature and Reason" and the variety of custom and civil law in Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Book I, viii, 10. He quotes Augustine's statement of the objections of the Sceptics.

persistence of sceptical dissent. And we realize even from this brief account of the conflict of scepticism with the theory of the Law of Nature, from Cicero to the Renaissance, what definite connotations and implications the apparently commonplace terms, "Nature," "Opinion" and "Custom" must have had for John Donne and his readers, interested and versed in one of the acutest problems of thought of the time.¹ We shall understand even better the definiteness of this problem in Renaissance thought after examining further the opposition to the doctrine of the Law of Nature.

IV

The "Libertine" Appeal to Nature

Besides the sceptical opposition to the Law of Nature, the persistence of which through the centuries of European political thought we have already sufficiently discussed, there was another tradition, hitherto ignored by historians of literature and thought, which developed from a reversal of the theory of the Golden Age. The dream of a perfect life at the beginning of the world, when mankind as well as all other creatures retained the divine impress of their origin, could not fail to attract those who sought in a divine Law of Nature the one stable and saving element in a corrupted human nature. Roman political theory appropriated this idea

¹ Donne could not, of course, have read Starkey's unpublished dialogue. But as a learned man, and especially as a student of Civil Law, he must have been familiar with the philosophy of Law which Starkey expounded.

of a primitive state of nature, and in Patristic thought it was accentuated by the parallel idea of the Garden of Eden. The Law of Nature was then explained as a survival from an age of innocence and perfection.¹ But, as has been said, there grew up a tradition which reversed this belief in primitive perfection, substituting for it an evolutionary theory of the gradual ascent of man from barbarism, from a state of nature which was not far removed from that of animals. And, as the notion of the Golden Age was congenial to the thought of the Stoics, so the opposite theory was developed by their adversaries, the Epicureans, and especially by Lucretius. Other poets had before him described the earliest state of man as savagery,² but his distinction and his influence on thought, both in antiquity and the Renaissance, give to his account an unusual historical importance.

In the fifth book of his De Rerum Natura Lucretius describes the evolution of the world in terms of a materialistic atomism. In many ways his theory parallels such modern conceptions as that of a gradual change from the simple to the complex, from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous. In the course of this change, blind and stumbling chance produced many failures, and out of the many combinations wrought by the "dance of atoms" only a few fittest have survived. Lucretius applied this theory alike to the evolution of the world and the evolution of human society. And, instead of a Golden Age, he conceives of primitive man as a wild animal, free from restraints and governed only by his desires.

¹ Carlyle, op. cit. I, 42-44, 117, 134, 144-146.

² Benn, A. W., The Greek Philosophers, London (1882). II, 98-ff.

"Nor could they look to the common weal, nor had they knowledge to make mutual use of any customs or laws. Whatever booty chance had offered to each, he bore it off; for each was taught at his own will to live and thrive for himself alone. And Venus would unite lovers in the woods; for each woman was wooed either by mutual passion, or by the man's fierce force and reckless lust, or by a price, acorns and arbutus-berries or choice pears."¹

One of the earliest civilizing influences was the institution of the family and the home.

"Then after they got themselves huts and skins and fire, and woman yoked with man retired to a single (home and the laws of marriage) were learnt, and they saw children sprung from them, then first the race of man began to soften."²

Evolution, however, does not necessarily imply amelioration or progress, unless measured by some scale of moral and spiritual values. Such values were foreign to the thought of Lucretius. The establishment of the family, for instance, did not signify to him the discovery of the sanctity or chivalry of conjugal love. The family he regarded as a purely utilitarian institution; and as for love, Lucretius advised against allowing any emotional

¹Translation by Cyril Bailey, Oxford (1910). p.218.

nec commune bonum poterant spectare neque ullis
moribus inter se scibant nec legibus uti.
quod cuique obtulerat praedae fortuna, ferebat
sponte sua sibi quisque valere et vivere doctus.
et Venus in silvis iungebat corpora amantum;
conciliabat enim vel mutua quamque cupido
vel violenta viri vis atque impensa libido
vel pretium, glandes atque arbita vel pira lecta.

De Rerum Natura, Book V, 958-965. ed. Munro, 3rd ed., Cambridge (1873). p.233.

²Translation cited, p.219.

Inde casas postquam ac pellis ignemque pararunt,
et mulier coniuncta viro concessit in unum

* * * *

cognita sunt, prolemque ex se videre creatam,
tum genus humanum primum mollescere coepit.

Book V, 1011-1014. Ed. cit. p.235.

disturbance or inconvenient personal devotion to accompany its physical satisfactions.¹ "Lucrèce," says Guyau, "de même que Rousseau, montre quelque faiblesse pour les hommes des premiers temps. Il admire leurs jouissances faciles, -- vives quoique grossières. Il a des rancunes contre notre civilisation."² Lucretius did not strengthen the moral and spiritual perceptions of mankind. In conduct and political ethics, as elsewhere, his influence has been on the side of scepticism, materialism and pessimism.

Down to the Renaissance, however, the conception of primitive man which Seneca made a part of European political thought was even more important historically than that of Lucretius. Seneca lived in an eclectic age, and combined the two contrary ideas of the Golden Age and of primitive simplicity and imperfect development.³ In the earliest age, he said, men were happy and uncorrupted. But as they were ignorant, their happiness was due merely to innocence and natural goodness, not to virtue, which is only achieved by effort and discipline. Neither could they be called wise. In their perfect innocence, they had no need of institutions; no government guarded private property, for they had all things in common. They followed without dissension the counsel of the best and wisest men. But, as human nature deteriorated and developed -- such is the paradox of the theory -- institutions had to be devised and laws enacted to coerce mankind back to order and regularity,

¹De Rerum Natura, Book IV, ll. 1058-1074.

²Guyau, M., La Morale d'Epicure, 5th ed., Paris (1910). p.170.

³"Ce stoïcien nourri des idées épicuriennes," Guyau says, calling attention to Seneca's indebtedness to Lucretius. Op. cit. p.167.

though it is never possible to secure by these means the harmony which existed without force in the Golden Age.¹

We need not here trace the influence of Seneca's inconsistent discussion on Roman, Patristic, Medieval and Renaissance political thought. It reappears everywhere, as Carlyle has shown in his History of Medieval Political Thought. "We have here," he says,

"a statement of that theory of the state of nature, which was to exercise a great influence upon the whole character of political thought for nearly eighteen centuries. It is true that the conception of the state of nature in Seneca is not the same as in some other writers; but the importance of the theory for our inquiry lies not so much in the particular forms in which men held it, as in the fact that in all forms it assumed a distinction between primitive and conventional institutions which largely influenced the ideal and sometimes even the practical tendency of men's thoughts."²

Ideas reappear in unexpected places and often in unusual guises. The confused conception of the Golden Age which in political thought is derived from Seneca, is, I believe, the explanation of some passages in the satirical continuation of the Romance of the Rose by Jean de Meung. This learned and witty bourgeois poet treated with cynical contempt the ideals of courtly love, as well as most of the other social and political institutions and modes of life of the Middle Ages; and the misery and injustice and hypocrisy of his time he attributed to the fall of man from the state of nature.³ In his revolt he dreamed again the dream of the

¹Seneca, Epistolae, XIV, 2. Carlyle, op. cit. I, 23-ff.

²Carlyle, op. cit. I, 23-24.

³Although these ideas are expressed by characters in the story, they are generally imputed to the author, as by Gustave Lanson, Un Naturaliste du XIIIe Siècle, in Revue Bleue, July 14, 1894, pp.35-41.

Golden Age, of its freedom from coercive government, of its facile life, its communism without work or responsibility, but especially of its free love and absence of family ties.¹ This "naturalist" did not think of Nature as the Stoics had done, as the revelation of Universal Reason, but as the deification of the physical and instinctive life,² in the way of which stand our conventional institutions and conventional morality. The Old Lady put the matter bluntly in the following speech to the Lover, a speech which serves as a chorus to her satirical narratives; she is speaking of wives:

"D'autre part, el sunt franchises nées;
 Loi les a condicionnées,
 Qui les oste de lor franchises
 Où Nature les avait mises:
 Car Nature n'est pas si sote
 Qu'ele feist nestre Marote
 Tant solement por Robichon,
 Se l'entendement i fichon,
 Ne Robichon por Mariete,
 Ne por Agnès, ne por Perrete:
 Ains nous a fait, biau filz, n'en doutes,
 Toutes por tous et tous por toutes,
 Chascune por chascun commune,
 Et chascun commun por chascune,
 Si que quant eus sunt affiées,
 Par loi prises et mariées,
 Por oster dissolucions,
 Et contens, et occisions,
 Et por aidier les norretures
 Dont il ont ensemble les cures,
 Si s'efforcent en toutes guises
 De retourner à lor franchises
 Les dames et les damoiseles,
 Quiex qu'el soient, ledes ou beles."³

What makes this appeal to Nature on behalf of free love particularly significant is that, in the passages referred to above, Jean de Meung associates the family with all the political institu-

¹ Le Roman de la Rose, ed. Marteau, Pierre. Orléans (1878). II, 276-ff. ll. 8671-8772; pp. 354-ff., ll. 9927-10008.

² Knowlton, E. C., The Goddess Nature in Early Periods, Journal of English and Germanic Philology, vol. XIX (1920).

³ Le Roman de la Rose, ed. cit. III, 270. ll. 14477-14500.

tions and arts of civilization as interfering with primitive and free life according to Nature in the Golden Age. Our human institutions have therefore merely the sanction of custom; and they violate Nature -- not the Nature of the Stoics, but a degraded Nature, personifying the irrational elements of life. The Golden Age, which to the Stoics had been an ideal of order and reason, became with Jean de Meung the dream of ease and unlimited freedom and indulgence.

Where did Jean find this revolutionary thought? One might answer that he found it along with his other rebellious ideas in his own cynical nature. They are indeed expressed with a vigor and sincerity which give them an original sound. But Jean in each case refers to ancient and learned authorities -- no doubt feeling that such ideas needed the patronage of authority:

"Si cum la letre le tesmoigne,
Par qui nous savons la besoigne
Furent amors loiaus et fines,
Sans covoitise et sans rapines."¹

and in another passage he says:

"De là vint li commencemens
As rois, as princes terriens,
Selonc l'escript as anciens;
Car par l'escript que nous avons,
Les fais des anciens savons;
Si les en devons mercier,
Et loer et remercier."²

Langlois, in his study of the sources of The Romance of the Rose, was unable to identify these "ancient writers." Ovid, as he pointed out, does not allude to the origin of government in his description

¹Roman, ed. cit. II, 278. ll. 8673-6.

²Roman, ed. cit. II, 358. ll. 9974-9980.

of the changes from the Golden Age to our own. Lucretius was not read in the Middle Ages, and therefore the parallelism with the fifth book of De Rerum Natura explains nothing.¹ Langlois therefore makes the rather vague suggestion that "sa théorie sur l'origine des pouvoirs publics était sans doute une opinion courante dans les écoles de son temps, et qu'on attribuait aux anciens," and quotes a passage from Isodore of Seville on the first election of princes and kings.² But the early election of rulers, the idea of the social contract, was only a part of the legal tradition which provides a much broader and completer parallel than Langlois thought, to the ideas of Jean, and, as we have seen, it was actually derived from antiquity. The old tradition of political thought was only given a new turn and significance by the sceptical, cynical and somewhat gross temperament of the medieval satirist.

Jean's naturalistic theories were disseminated by the wide circulation of The Romance of the Rose, not only in the Middle Ages, but even into the Renaissance. French poets imitated his protest against the conventions of the political order of his day as well as his denunciation of the bonds of marriage.³ Chaucer, in the true English manner, stopped short of the violent revolt of his

¹ Scholars disagree, however, on the question of the accessibility of Lucretius in the Middle Ages. See discussion and references in Sandys, J.E., History of Classical Scholarship, 2nd ed., Cambridge (1906). I, 631-3; and in Merrill's edition of Lucretius, New York (1907), Introduction, pp. 50-1.

² Langlois, Ernest, Origines et Sources du Roman de la Rose, Paris (1891). pp. 125-7.

³ Wood, Mary Morton, The Spirit of Protest in Old French Literature, New York (1917). See especially the poems on free love as the state of Nature, pp. 161-ff. Dr. Wood, who ignored the development of

"emancipated" Continental predecessor. "The English poet," says one student of him, "was philosopher and economist enough to recognize and to insist on the institution of marriage as the great steadier of society. He is not at one with the French poet when Jean makes serious attacks on marriage and paints in glowing colors a world of unrestraint and free love."¹ But there is perhaps a recollection of Jean in the impatient reflections of the lover on St. Valentine's day in Lydgate's Flower of Courtesy:

"The sely wrenne, the titmose also,
The litel redbrest, have free eleccioun
To flyen y-ferè and to gider go
Wher-as hem liste, abouten enviroun,
As they of kynde have inclinacioun,
And as Nature, emperesse and gyde,
Of every thing, liste to provyde;

But man aloon, alas! the harde stounde!
Ful cruelly, by kyndes ordinaunce,
Constrayned is, and by statut bounde,
And debarred from alle such plesaunce.
What meneth this? What is this purveyaunce
Of god above, agayn al right of kynde,
Withoute cause, so narowe man to bynde?"²

It is more difficult to trace any direct influence of Jean de Meung in the Renaissance. Such successors as Rabelais and Montaigne owed more to classical writers and to the paganism which tinged the revival of learning. The spirit of the age fostered audacious action and thought, and the "libertine" worship of Nature was soon so widely spread as to become a commonplace. The pert and uncontrollable young Euphues in Lyly's novel thus replies to the admonitions of the sage old Neapolitan, that he is following the

political theory outside of poetry, mistakenly refers the political ideas of Jean de Meung to Ovid's account of the Four Ages. See pp. 15, 42, 52.

¹Fansler, Dean S., Chaucer and the Roman de la Rose, N. Y. (1914). p. 227.

²Skeat, W. W., Chaucerian and Other Pieces. Oxford (1897). pp. 267-8.

best philosophers, Cicero and Aristotle, and taking Nature as his only guide;¹ the inconsequential reasoning and inaccurate scholarship are in character, and may possibly represent the platitudinous generalizations which must have passed current as philosophy in wide circles. And in the chorus to the first Act of *Aminta*, Tasso laments the passing of the Age of Gold, not because the earth then provided sustenance without the labor of man, or because life was free from the misery of war or the burdens of traffic,

"Ma sol perchè quel vano
 Nome senza soggetto,
 Quell' idolo d'errori, idol d'inganno,
 Quel che dal volgo insano
 Onor poscia fu detto,
 (Che di nostra natura 'l feo tiranno)
 Non mischiava il suo affanno
 Fra le liete dolcezze
 Dell' amoroso gregge;
 Nè fu sua dura legge
 Nota a quell' alme in libertate avvezze:
 Ma legge aurea e felice,
 Che Natura scolpi 'S'ei piace, ei lice.'"²

Giordano Bruno, also, refers to "quella legge naturale, per la quale è licito a ciascun maschio di aver tante mogli, quante ne può nutrire et impregnare."³ The Libertines of the Renaissance appropriated Nature as their goddess and the Golden Age as their ideal, identifying with both conceptions exactly the freedom and

¹Lyly, *Works*, ed. Bond. I, 191-2.

²Tasso, *Opere*. Pisa (1821). II, 37. Cf. with Donne's passage on the "golden laws of nature," quoted above.

³Bruno, Giordano, *Opere*, ed. Wagner. Leipzig (1830). II, 126. But Bruno begins the third dialogue of the *Spaccio* with a criticism of the Golden Age of Tasso and other Italian poets. See ed. cit., II, 199-ff. He says, for example, "Ne l'età dunque de l'oro per l'ozio gli uomini non erano più virtuosi, che sin al presente le bestie son virtuose, e forse erano più stupidi, che molte di queste." Bruno was a man of contradictions. Though certain passages display a "libertine" strain, many others show that he was imbued with a vigorous ethical feeling.

individualism which the Stoics had sought to combat by their means. Like Euphues, they mis-read their Cicero and Aristotle; hence the apparently paradoxical remark of Du Vair,¹ that we must choose between the two irreconcilable philosophies of Nature and Stoicism. But this sceptical philosophy of Nature resulted in the Renaissance from the confluence of many currents of thought, medieval and classical, and in its more popular form was vague and unformulated, highly important though it be for an understanding of the temper of the age. Unless accompanied by other specific ideas and doctrines, it can hardly be traced from one writer to another.

As in his scepticism, so also in his naturalistic conception of the Golden Age, Donne's thought resembled the current "libertine" ideas of the Renaissance. He repeatedly refers to the free love of the Golden Age:

"How happy were our Syres in ancient times,
Who held plurality of loves no crime."

Like other poets of the libertine tradition of the Golden Age, Donne worshipped in Nature the Aphrodite Pandemos, and appealed to other Natural Laws for justification of the liberties forbidden by the orthodox principle of the Law of Nature.

All the elements, then, of Donne's Pyrrhonism were current before him; we have discussed already the similarities and differences between his ideas and the sceptical attack on the legal tradition of the Law of Nature. What was lacking there, namely a rival philosophy of Nature opposed to the Stoic and legal tradition, we have found in this degraded form of the legend of the

¹Quoted in Chapter I, p. 58.

Golden Age. Donne combined this Naturalism with Scepticism. But here he had a predecessor in Montaigne.

V

Scepticism and Naturalism in Montaigne

How Montaigne arrived at his philosophy blended of scepticism and naturalism, has been admirably set forth by M. Villey, to whose work all discussions of Montaigne must henceforth be indebted.¹ Montaigne began as an adherent of Stoicism, which, with Platonism, had been interwoven with Christian thought and become a part of Renaissance idealism in both personal and political ethics. But Stoicism was not long to his taste. His nature was too supple for its restraints, and too easy and tolerant to submit long to its discipline or to feel long the attractiveness of its elevation. Montaigne had a generous sympathy with all human impulses; he abhorred life cut to a pattern. It is probable therefore that his development would have been what it was, though perhaps slower and less distinct, had he never gone through a definite intellectual crisis. But his apostacy from Stoicism was hastened when about 1575 he became enthusiastic over Greek scepticism, as expounded in the Hypotyposes of Sextus Empiricus. Early in 1576 he had a medal struck in honor of Sextus, with his own image on the reverse side. Ten of the inscriptions in his library he took from the Hypotyposes; from the same source he makes more than a score of

¹Villey, Pierre, Les Sources et l'Évolution des Essais de Montaigne. 2 vols. Paris (1908).

borrowings for his most philosophical essay, the Apology. The Sceptics he called "le plus sage parti des philosophes."¹

For a short period, Montaigne, under the influence of the philosophy of Sextus, regarded custom and tradition as his best guide. But such a philosophy is a worse tyranny than Stoicism, and contains in itself the acid of dissolution; Montaigne soon passed through it, to his third and mature philosophy of individualism based on "Nature." Nature then meant to him primarily his own nature, which he regarded as his own unique lawgiver. Therefore he studied himself more than any philosophy, his desires, his tastes, the needs of his own individuality, and his essays are the observations he made of his own physiology and psychology. Distrustful of all speculation in ethical idealism, thoroughly sceptical regarding conventions and traditions, he followed nature in everything, and in case of doubt, "nature" meant to him his own nature. "I cheerefully and thankfully," he says in the last pages of his last essay, "and with a good heart, accept what nature hath created for me; and am there with well pleased, and am proud of it . . . temperance is a moderatrix, and not an adversary of sensualities. Nature is a gentle guide: Yet not more gentle, then prudent and just."² Nature is gentle! That is, the nature of Montaigne, a man devoid of aspirations and spiritual reaches, is gentle. "I study my selfe more than any other subject. It is my supernaturall Metaphisike, it is my naturall Philosophy... Oh how soft, how gentle, and how sound a pillow is ignorance and

¹Villey, op. cit. I, 218.

²Trans. Florio, Tudor Translations. London (1893). III, 391.

incuriosity to rest a well composed head upon. I had rather understand my selfe well in my selfe, then in Cicero."¹

The greatest and most influential sceptic of the Renaissance, Montaigne gave classic expression to all the libertine thought of his age, intellectualized it, and elevated it to the level of a serious philosophy which educated men could not ignore. It would indeed be strange if Donne, who beyond most Englishmen of his time was eager for new ideas, such as the science of Galileo and Kepler, should not in his youth have read a work so congenial to his tastes and so well known as the Essays.² A reference to Montaigne in a letter dated by Gosse about 1603 or 1604 seems to imply that Donne had read him some time before.³ But the youth of Donne is veiled in obscurity, and only a very few facts are known regarding his very extensive early reading.⁴ We can at best make certain inferences. A University man, an avid student of the Humanities as well as Law, probably knew the treatises of Cicero De Re Publica and De Legibus; as his interest lay more in controversial studies than in poetry and belles-lettres, it is unlikely that Donne read so thoroughly as to be acquainted with The Romance of the Rose, and he may not have read Lucretius; possibly

¹ Florio, ed. cit. III, 338-9.

² Already in 1595 a translation of the Essays was licensed for publication, and Florio's was licensed in 1600. The real popularity of Montaigne is indicated by early imitations, by Bacon in 1597 and by Cornwallis in 1600. The latter knew Montaigne only through manuscript translations which evidently circulated widely before the publication of Florio's translation in 1603. Lee, Sidney, The French Renaissance in England, N.Y. (1910). pp. 165-ff. John Donne could of course read the original.

³ ". . . Michel Montaigne says he hath seen (as I remember) 400 volumes of Italian letters." Gosse, Life and Letters of John Donne. I, 122.

⁴ Grierson, op. cit. II, 1-6.

he had read Tasso's Aminta, inasmuch as he knew Dante, Aretino and Ariosto. But none of these possible sources of Donne's "Libertinism" offer so complete a parallel to Donne's thought as Montaigne, nor did any of them lie more directly in his path. Such conjectures, however, are slender evidence, and Donne's discipleship to Montaigne must remain a probability only, each reader forming his own opinion. As to the similarity of their ideas, although it has never been pointed out, there can be no question.

In the first place, Montaigne's study of Sextus had completely emancipated him from rational idealism, from belief in any universal moral truth ascertainable by reason. His scepticism is definitely expounded in his early essay on Custom, where he says, for example, that

"the lawes of conscience, which we say to proceed from nature, rise and proceed of custome: every man holding in special regard, and inward veneration the opinions approved, and customes received about him, cannot without remorse leave them, nor without applause applie himselfe unto them."¹

In his Apologie of Raymond Sebond, he submits all methods and means of knowledge to a systematic criticism based on principles drawn from the Hypotyposes; his remarks on the theory of the Law of Nature are especially scathing:

"What goodness is that," he asks, "which but yesterday I saw in sredit and esteeme, and to morrow, to have lost all reputation, and that the crossing of a River, is made a crime? What truth is that, which these Mountaines bound, and is a lie in the World beyond them? But they are pleasant, when to allow the Laws some certaintie, they say, that there be some firme, perpetuall and immoveable, which they call naturall, and by the condition of their proper essence, are imprinted in mankind: of which some make three in number, some

¹ Florio, ed. cit. I, 112.

foure, some more, some lesse: an evident token,
that it is a marke as doubtfull as the rest."¹

A few pages further on he presents the Sceptical explanation of the supposedly sacred laws of society, with a pertinent illustration:

"Lawes take their authoritie from possession and custome: It is dangerous to reduce them to their beginning: In rowling on, they swell, and grow greater and greater, as doe our rivers: follow them upward, unto their source, and you shall find them but a bubble of water, scarce to be discerned, which in gliding on swelleth so proud, and gathers so much strength. Behold the ancient considerations, which have given the first motion to this famous torrent, so full of dignitie, of honour and reverence, you shall find them so light and weake, that these men which will weigh all, and complaine of reason, and who receive nothing upon trust and authoritie, it is no wonder if their judgements are often far-distant from common judgement. Men that take Natures first image for a patterne, it is no marvaile, if in most of their opinions, they misse the common-beaten path. As for example; few amongst them would have approved the forced conditions of our marriages and most of them would have had women in community, and without any private respect."²

But as a substitute for the Law of Nature, Montaigne, like Donne, developed another philosophy of Nature. "I have taken for my regard this ancient precept, very rawly and simply: That 'We cannot erre in following Nature': and that the soveraigne document is, for a man to conforme himselfe to her."³ He was in

¹ Florio, ed. cit. II, 303.

² Florio, ed. cit. II, 307. With this passage compare especially the following lines from Donne's Elegy XVII:

"Our liberty's revers'd, our Charter's gone,
And we're made servants to opinion,
A monster in no certain shape attir'd,
And whose originall is much desir'd,
Formlesse at first, but goeing on it fashions,
And doth prescribe manners and laws to nations.
Here love receiv'd immedicable harms . . ."

³ Florio, ed. cit. III, 322.

accord with the libertine tradition, and with John Donne, too, in finding this simple and uncorrupted Nature in the Golden Age, or in what he regarded as a survival of that blissful period, the savage state. The laws of civilization are too numerous and artificial. "I believe it were better to have none at all, then so infinite a number as we have. Nature gives them ever more happy, then those we give our selves. Witnessse the image of the golden age that poets faine; and the state wherein we see divers nations to live, which have no other."¹ His famous essay on Cannibals is an apotheosis of primitive life, at the expense of civilization.

"Those nations seeme therefore so barbarous to me," he says, "because they have received very little fashion from humane wit, and are yet neere their originall naturalitie. The lawes of nature doe yet command them, which are but little bastardized by ours, and that with such puritie, as I am sometimes grieved the knowledge of it came no sooner to light, at what time there were men, that better than we could have judged of it. I am sorie, Lycurgus and Plato had it not: for me seemeth that what in those nations we see by experience, doth not only exceed all the pictures wherewith licentious Poesie hath proudly imbellished the golden age, and all her quaint inventions to faine a happy condition of man, but also the conception and desire of Philosophy. They could not imagine a genuitie so pure and simple, as we see it by experience; nor ever beleieve our societie might be maintained with so little art and humane combination. It is a nation, would I answer Plato, that hath no kinde of traffike, no knowledge of Letters, no intelligence of numbers, no name of magistrate, nor of politike superioritie; no use of service, of riches or of povertie; no contracts, no successions, no partitions, no occupations but idle; no respect of kindred, but common, no apparell but naturall, no manuring of lands, no use of wine, corne, or mettell. The very

¹ Florio, ed. cit. III, 329.

words that import lying, falshood, treason, dissimulations, covetousness, envie, detraction, and pardon, were never heard of amongst them. How dissonant would hee finde his imaginarie commonwealth from this perfection!"¹

Montaigne does not fail to give warm praise, too, to primitive matrimonial arrangements.

"Their men have many wives, and by how much more they are reputed valiant, so much the greater is their number. The manner and beautie of their marriages is wondrous strange and remarkable: For, the same jealousie our wives have to keepe us from the love and affection of other women, the same have theirs to procure it. Being more carefull for their husbands honour and content, than of any thing else: They endeavour and apply all their industrie, to have as many rivals as possibly, they can, forasmuch as it is a testimonie of their husbands vertue. Our women would count it a wonder, but it is not so: It is a vertue properly Matrimoniall."²

The Nature which guided Montaigne, we suspect, was excessively gentle. And there may be disadvantages in understanding oneself in oneself rather than in Cicero!

Thus Montaigne had, before Donne, brought together the two philosophies, Scepticism and Naturalism, which characterized the "Libertine" tradition. To this tradition or school, John Donne for a time belonged, and Montaigne seems most likely to have been his master. Perhaps he never was a perfect disciple. His "queasy pain of being beloved and loving" was a sign of a restlessness, a dissatisfaction, which would of itself have led him beyond the

¹ Florio, ed. cit. I, 222. Shakespeare borrows this Rousseauistic passage, but, significantly, only for the purposes of comedy; Gonzalo plays with the idea a moment and then flings it aside as "merry fooling." Tempest, II, 1.

² Florio, ed. cit. III, 329.

boundaries of the world of Montaigne; he had deep needs that Montaigne could never have understood; his intellectual and spiritual life began at the place where Montaigne's ended. But whatever his later development, it is clear that the ideas which fascinated the youthful Donne are identical with the thought of Montaigne's maturity.

VI

Continuations in the Seventeenth Century

Montaigne became the "livre de chevet" of the "libertines" in France as well as in England. From him, and from his disciple Charron, they drew a light and superficial philosophy, sufficient to give the spice of a cynical sophistication to their pleasures and poetry. Like their great master, they questioned all moral idealism and would follow only "gentle" Nature. The foremost of them, Théophile, imitated perfectly both the temper and ideas of Montaigne:

"J'approuve qu'un chacun suive en tout la nature;
Son empire est plaisant et sa loi n'est pas dure....
Je pense que chacun auroit assez d'esprit
Suivant le libre train que nature prescrit...¹
Ne t'oppose jamais aux droits de la nature."¹

Garasse was therefore correct in his formulation of the ideas of the beaux-esprits:

"Il n'y a point d'autre divinité ny puissance
souveraine au monde que la NATURE, laquelle il
faut contenter en toutes choses, sans rien refuser

¹Théophile, Oeuvres Complètes, ed. Alleaume. Paris (1866).
Notice, lxvi.

à nostre corps ou à nos sens de ce qu'ils desirent de nous en l'exercice de leurs puissances et facultez naturelles."¹

Ideas usually lose some of their definiteness in crossing the channel into England, and libertine Naturalism is not so easily disengaged for purposes of historical treatment from the English poetry of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless it was there, and gave, as in France, the air of philosophical sagacity to the sophistication and scepticism which the gay and licentious courts of the Stuarts especially affected. The verse of Theophile was not unknown in England, where he spent his two years of exile.² And Montaigne was of course as popular there as in France. The immense prestige of Donne up to the Restoration familiarized poets with his audacious verse, some of which they directly imitated.³

A few quotations will illustrate how scepticism in ethics combined with Naturalistic conceptions of love, was a quite definite tradition in certain circles of seventeenth century England. In Daniel's Ulysses and the Siren (1605), the Siren replies to the argument of Ulysses, that "pleasure leaves a touch at last to show that it was ill":

¹Theophile, ed. cit. Notice, xl. A sufficient number of pièces justificatives can be found in the verse of the esprits libres published by Frédéric Lachèvre, in Le Procès du Poète Théophile de Viau, Paris (1909). II, 305-419. Perrens has shown, in his work previously referred to, the pervasiveness of libertine thought in France in the seventeenth century; and in his conclusion he quotes two apt illustrations from Voltaire and Diderot. Op.cit. p.493.

²Cotton imitated him. See Sembower, C. J., Life and Poetry of Charles Cotton, N. Y. (1911). pp. 88-94.

³For instance, Francis Beaumont's The Indifferent and Love's Freedom; Goe catch a star, in Wits Recreations (1640); and Carew's Rapture.

"That doth opinion only cause
That's out of custom bred,
Which makes us many other laws
Than ever Nature did."

Milton's Comus has no skill in sceptical dialectics, but he shares the Naturalistic hedonism of some of Milton's contemporaries.

"Imposter," cries the Lady in reply to him,

"do not charge most innocent Nature
As if she would her children should be riotous
With her abundance."

In the drama, John Ford is distinguished for his sympathy with libertine ethics, which he combined with a sentimental and attenuated Platonism.¹ Thomas Carew, to his credit, sensibly objects in two poems to a naturalistic code of morals for mankind; his objection is of course additional proof that the idea was current.² And in Dryden's Sigismonda and Guiscardo the heroine defends her conduct by distinguishing between man-made laws and the primitive

¹Sherman, S. P., Ford's 'Tis Pity and the Broken Heart, Boston (1915). Introduction. Cf. Lee, Vernon, The Italy of the Elizabethan Dramatists, in Euphorion, London (1899). Professor Sherman points out the analogy between Ford's 'Tis Pity and Canace e Macareo, a tragedy of incest by Sperone Speroni, and thinks the Italian play may have been Ford's source. His summary of Speroni's defence of his play is worth quoting here, as showing in conjunction all the traditions discussed in this chapter:

"Speroni reminds his hearers of two arguments urged by Dejopeja, wife of Eolo. The children did not deserve death, she maintained, first, because they had merely done per forza what the gods do per volonta in heaven; second, because they had done that in the Iron Age which was permitted in the innocent Age of Gold. This position is supported by a multitude of references to the poets. Then glancing at the customs of the ancient Persians and Egyptians, Speroni comes to a point of distinct coincidence with Ford, namely, that the union of brother and sister is forbidden, not by nature but by the laws, and not even by all laws." Introduction, li-iii.

²Carew, Poems. Muses' Library. pp. 160, 163.

laws of Nature.

In the light of this libertine tradition which existed before and after Donne, we can appreciate something of what went on in the mind of the young student of law who, as Courthope said, was a sceptic in religion and a revolutionist in love. The originality of his singularly modern ideas is only apparent; they were in fact the current thought of a definite Renaissance school of Scepticism and Naturalism. We have traced briefly the origins and development of this school, and suggested how large a part it played in making the tone and temper of the Renaissance and seventeenth century. With this school the learned Donne in some way came in contact, very likely in Montaigne as well as elsewhere. With these "libertine" ideas he played, at times gayly and lightly, at times more seriously and cynically. From them he was converted, biographers seem to agree, chiefly by his marriage; but his own nature must have been too deep, too susceptible to idealism, to have long remained a worshipper of the earthly Aphrodite. Yet his youthful scepticism profoundly influenced him. The saint was a different saint for having passed through his youthful period of hard living and hard thinking. He must have acquired some of Pascal's sense of "les grandeurs et misères de l'homme." And as Pascal appropriated the scepticism and cynicism of the French libertine movement and turned them to the uses of a profound and noble religious feeling, one asks if this saintly divine, too, had learned in his early years of doubt and groping some of his passionate awareness of his miserableness and his need of divine support. If our historical study has made Donne more clearly a

man of his own time, a typical Renaissance sceptic, yet the study of his whole life should possess an intrinsic value, also, in giving us an insight into some of the workings of human nature, and a measure of the adequacy of the naturalistic philosophy which is widely current even in our own day.

CHAPTER FOUR

DAVIES' NOSCE TEIPSUM AND THE IDEALISTIC TRADITION

I. Suggested Sources of Nosce Teipsum.- II. Precursors of Davies.- III. Parallels from Primaudaye and Others.- IV. The Obsolete Rationalism of Davies.

In the last decade of the sixteenth century, while Donne was living his somewhat turbulent youth and writing his Songs and Elegies, another member of the Inns of Court, John Davies, was likewise leading the free and reckless life of a gallant and winning for himself, by his caustic and free-spoken epigrams, the title of the "English Martial."¹ About 1594 he had also performed the feat of writing Orchestra in fifteen days, a long fantastic poem in praise of dancing, a "suddaine, rash, half-capreol of my wit," remarkable chiefly for its ease and mastery of versification. It was dedicated to a friend, Richard Martin. But for some reason the two friends fell out, and Davies broke a bastinado over the head of Martin while the latter was seated at dinner at the Barristers' Table. In February, 1598, Davies was disbarred by unanimous sentence, and withdrew to Oxford. His disgrace seems to have weighed heavily on him. But he soon produced a poem, Nosce Teipsum, published in 1599 with a dedication to the Queen, which not only gave him a legal career of distinction by bringing him to the attention

¹See an epigram by Guilpin, E., in Skialetheia (1598). Quoted by Grosart in The Complete Poems of Sir John Davies, London (1876). II, 9.

of James I, but made his name famous in English literature. His error and disgrace proved to be his good fortune.

Nosce Teipsum is philosophy in verse. It consists of two distinct parts: the first, comparatively brief and apparently introductory, discusses the limitations of human knowledge; the second and main section is a demonstration of the immortality of the soul from the immateriality of its nature and functions. In his exposition Davies proceeds systematically and logically. He begins with a discussion of the nature of the soul and its connection with the body, the object being to distinguish the soul from the material substance with which it is so intimately combined. In regard to the origin of the soul he discusses the two theories debated in his day, whether each soul is created successively by God or whether it is the offspring of the parental souls. In the description of each sense and faculty he never misses an opportunity to point out the supra-sensual elements of knowledge. After he has in this way described the soul, he passes to argument, elaborating on six reasons for believing the soul immortal. Five objections by the sceptics are then refuted, and the poem closes with a triumphant acclamation, a warning to make our lives worthy of the marvellous nature with which we are endowed. The whole poem is thus in effect an argument, a defense of one of the central ideas of religious thought. As such, what is its originality and intrinsic value? And how is it related to the thought of the sixteenth century? Was Davies engaged in stemming the tide of scepticism which was sweeping over the world? Was he aware of the nature and strength of that opposition which was gathering in the camps of the libertines and materialists? The answer must be sought in a study

of Renaissance thought as well as of the tone and structure of the poem itself. And, as in the case of the sceptical Donne, a study of the intellectual conflict in which Davies was involved may not only illuminate his own poem, but also make clear another phase of the work of scepticism as a liberating force in the Renaissance, in the transition from Medieval to Modern thought.

I

Suggested Sources of Nosce Teipsum

As philosophical poetry is usually derivative, a number of scholars have looked for the sources of the ideas which Davies wove into his popular poem. The earliest suggestion was made in 1786, in a private letter, by a certain Alexander Dalrymple, Esq., who had picked up Wither's translation of Nemesis De Natura Hominis, "by which I find," he wrote, "Sir John Davies's poem on the Immortality of the Soul is chiefly taken from Nemesis."¹ Grosart, on behalf of the author he edited, denied this charge as "absolutely untrue, an utter delusion," and claimed for Davies the merit of "deep and original thought."² But only a few years after Grosart's edition, another scholar, Mary A. Ward, expressed doubts as to the originality of Nosce Teipsum.

"Some handbook of Christian philosophy," she thought, "seems to have fallen in the author's way during a year of retirement at Oxford, -- possibly the De Natura Hominis of Nemesis, of which Wither

¹Nichols, John, Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century, London (1822). IV, 549-550.

²Davies, ed. cit. Memorial - Introduction, pp. lix-ff.

published an English translation in 1636, -- and the text suited a sobered mood, while it offered an opportunity for rehabilitating a reputation shaken by youthful folly and extravagance."¹

More recently Courthope also concluded that there could be no doubt

"that, before setting to work on his poem, Davies had deeply studied the subject as a whole in the most authoritative text-books of philosophy and theology, nor that in some of these, notably Nemesisius' De Natura Hominis, he found the suggestion of the organic ideas on which his composition is built. On the other hand, the order and method of the argument, the beauty of the illustrations, and the harmony and dignity of the versification are his own, and in view of the profundity and difficulty of his subject, it will be generally allowed that the poet's mastery of his materials raises Nosce Teipsum, as far at least as the art is concerned, to the same rank as the De Rerum Natura: in imagination, of course, neither Davies nor any other didactic poet can compare with Lucretius."²

In a volume devoted exclusively to a study of the poem, Mr. E. H. Sneath maintained that Davies was influenced by four thinkers, -- Aristotle, Cicero, Nemesisius and Calvin.³ The latest student of Davies agrees with Grosart in denying any influence of Nemesisius, but thinks that the ideas of Davies were derived from a study of Aristotle's De Anima and modified by a reading of religious commentators, especially Thomas Aquinas.⁴ Her statement of these conclusions is worth quoting for a revealing passage in it:

¹Ward, The English Poets. I, 549.

²Courthope, Hist. of Eng. Poetry. III, 57-8.

³Sneath, E. Hershey, Philosophy in Poetry, New York (1903).

⁴Seemann, Margarete, Sir John Davies, Sein Leben und Seine Werke. Wiener Beiträge, Vol. XLI (1913). pp. 23-24.

"Tatsächlich finden wir in 'Nosce Teipsum' einen deutlichen Anschluß an Aristotles und mit den Aussprüchen dieses Philosophen verflochten die religiös-philosophischen Ansichten der Aristotelesforscher, namentlich des Thomas von Aquino. Uebrigens waren es nicht allgemein bekannte philosophische Aussprüche, die Davies in seinem Gedichte aneinanderreichte (my italics), vielmehr hat ihm ein besonderes Werk des groszen Griechen als Vorlage für sein philosophisches Gedicht gedient, und er hat es in origineller Weise als Gerippe für sein Werk benutzt. Es waren zweifellos 'Die drei Bücher über die Seele,' die Davies seinem 'Nosce Teipsum' zugrunde gelegt hat."¹

With such wide divergence of views, it can not be said that the derivation of the philosophical ideas of Davies has been established. The researches of scholars have been fruitful and suggestive, but not definitive; and the reason for this failure is, I think, in an erroneous conception of the problem and the method of attacking it. To say, for instance, that Davies took Aristotle as the basis for his discussion of the immortality of the soul, merely modifying here and there in the light of the Christian philosophy of Aquinas, is to ignore sixteen centuries of discussion and development; it is to ignore at once Davies' relation to tradition and to his own time. And it is because students have neglected the extensive previous literature on immortality and studied Nosce Teipsum abstracted from the intellectual conflict of the time, that they have failed to emphasize its partisan and polemical nature. It is impossible within the limits of a chapter to make a complete study of its sources; but a consideration of the poem in its Renaissance setting will at least show in what way its

¹Seemann, op. cit. p. 24.

spiritualistic philosophy is related to Medieval thought and consciously opposed to the rising tide of scepticism which finally conquered in the seventeenth century.

II

Precursors of Davies

In his introductory poem Davies speaks of the futility of the knowledge of the material world, which most people seek most earnestly. Preoccupied with our surroundings, we remain strangers to ourselves. But in taking for his motto the ancient oracle, "Know thyself," Davies does not mean a knowledge of the frailties and inclinations of his nature, after the manner of Montaigne, nor even of such spiritual aspirations as Pascal added to Montaigne's anatomy of man. Davies speaks as a metaphysician. His whole purpose is to demonstrate the necessity of a rationalistic idealism. He sought to know in himself the rational powers of the soul, to set them forth so clearly that his readers could see the inadequacy of a materialistic explanation of them, and thereby to prove the necessity of assuming the survival of the rational soul after the death of the body. With all its wealth of imagery and its multitude of introspective observations, Nosce Teipsum is essentially a piece of reasoning, a demonstration of a metaphysical doctrine. In studying the relation of Davies to the history of thought, we must guard against overemphasizing similarities in details and even in figures of speech such as were common property of all writers on the subject, and keep firmly in mind his fundamental idea and purpose.

This tradition of spiritual psychology did not originate with Aristotle; on the contrary, as we shall see, his attitude towards it was hesitating and uncertain. Plato was its first great champion and formulator and the Platonic spirit always continued to permeate it. Asserting that only the rational was truly real, Plato established a sharp dualism between mind and matter. This dualism appeared in his theory of knowledge as a distinction between those elements which come through sensation and those rational and self-evident principles which the soul recognizes at first sight, or, as it were, remembers from a previous existence. By means of the reason, therefore, man is enabled to participate in the perfect and eternal world of Ideas. This supra-sensual nature of the reason Plato regarded as a revelation of the eternal life of the soul; and he believed in its separate existence both before birth and after death. Plato therefore indicated the problem and showed the way for the later attacks on materialism, although he left much for his successors to do, both in the way of developing the implications of his doctrine and of enriching it by more thorough observation of the processes of thought.¹

An illustration may be given of the persistence of his influence even down to Davies. In The Republic, Book X, Plato raises the question whether the soul, like all natural objects, can be destroyed by its own appropriate evil. The evils of the soul are injustice, intemperance, cowardice, and ignorance, but though they mar the soul they can not destroy it. Since it persists in spite of them, it must be indestructible and immortal. Augustine

¹See especially Plato's Meno, Phaedo and Phaedrus, and The Republic, Book X.

uses the same argument, but with the omission of the ethical element. Ferraz thus summarizes his discussion:

"Si la vérité, dit-il, fait la vie de l'âme, de telle sorte que le sage diffère de l'insensé en ce qu'il possède la vie avec plus de plénitude, n'est-il pas à craindre que la vie, qu'elle tient de la vérité, lui soit ôtée par l'erreur qui est son contraire? Nullement. L'erreur ne peut avoir sur l'âme d'autre effet que de la faire errer; or le fait d'errer est si loin de détruire la vie de l'âme, qu'il la suppose; car pour errer, il faut vivre. Si donc la vie, que l'âme tient de la vérité, ne peut lui être ôtée par l'erreur qui est son contraire, qu'est-ce qui peut la lui ravir?"¹

And Davies condenses the argument into a quatrain:

"Perhaps some thing repugnant to her kind,
By strong antipathy, the Soule may kill;
But what can be contrary to the minde,
Which holds all contraries in concord still?"²

Aristotle made a great advance on Plato in that he sought by scientific method and empirical observation to place psychology on a scientific foundation. His discussion of the senses and his description of the faculties of the mind became models for later treatises down to the Renaissance, and it is only to be expected that Davies should in his poem make use of an analy-

¹Augustine, De Immortalitate Animae, Chap.XI. Summarized by Ferraz, M., De La Psychologie de Saint Augustin, 2nd ed., Paris (1869). p.434.

²Davies, ed.cit. I,97.-- In citing parallels in this section of my chapter, I am not pretending to have found Davies' direct sources. Quite the contrary, I am conscious of the very great complexity of the problem of finding them, just because the tradition of which he was an exponent was the result of ages of growth, by development and accretion. My main object is to see what it meant to Davies, and to his readers, to hold certain ideas in preference to others current at the same time; and since, in the Renaissance, tradition still conferred weight and authority, it is helpful to know who were Davies' predecessors.

sis which had remained standard for so long. But when we come to the main problem, and ask what Aristotle thought about the nature of the soul and its immortality, we find that Davies was by no means Aristotelian. For Aristotle seems to have doubted whether the soul survives after death; at any rate, his influence, when not modified by the Platonic preconceptions of his students, was against the belief.

His conception of the soul is an application of his general metaphysics of form and matter. The soul, he said, is the form, or entelechia, of a natural body furnished with organs. By virtue of this soul, the organism can exist as organism, and function. Thus axicity would be the soul of an axe, if an axe were an organism; and if the eye were an animal, eyesight would be its soul.¹ This metaphysical theory of the soul was practically a denial of any individual immortality. And, as an eminent French translator of Aristotle has pointed out, the tendency among his most faithful disciples has been materialistic.

"Pour saisir la vraie pensée d'Aristote, il convient aussi d'interroger ses disciples, ses successeurs, ses commentateurs les plus autorisés: Aristoxène, Dicéarque, Straton, Alexandre d'Aphrodise, auxquels vous pouvez joindre Averroës, Pomponat et leurs partisans. Tous répondront unanimement que l'âme est mortelle, et ne survit point au corps. Ajoutez que c'est là une conséquence évidente et nécessaire de cette théorie qui fait de l'âme la forme du corps."²

¹De Anima, II, 6-9. Ed. Hicks, R.D., Cambridge (1907). p.51.

²Barthélemy-Saint-Hilaire, Psychologie d'Aristote, Paris (1846). Préface, xli.-- Davies follows the Patristic tradition in defining the soul as an immaterial substance:

"The soule a substance, and a spirit is....

She is a substance, and a reall thing,

Which hath it selfe an actuall working might."

Davies, ed. cit. I, 29.

But Aristotle also approached the problem of the nature of the soul from the side of psychology. In the first place, the soul of man has powers that distinguish him from other living beings or organisms. Plants have merely vegetative souls; animals have in addition souls whose distinctive characteristics are motion and sensation. But man has also a rational soul which employs those powers in the realisation of the "form" peculiar to man. Aristotle emphasized the dependence of this rational soul on the senses. It is true, he drew a distinction between passive reason, the material of perceptions arising from the senses, and the active reason, or pure reason, which contributes from its own nature the supra-sensual element of knowledge. In this "active reason" Aristotle made a concession to idealism, and one might have expected his disciples to develop from it a spiritualistic psychology.¹ But the influence of Aristotle here, also, was on the side of materialism. He denied the possibility of the separate existence of the active reason. For, he says,

"since, apart from sensible magnitudes there is nothing, as it would seem, independently existent, it is in the sensible forms that the intelligible forms exist, both the abstractions of mathematics, as they are called, and all the qualities and attributes of sensible things. And for this reason, as without sensation a man would not learn or understand anything, so at the very time when he is actually thinking he must have an image before him."²

¹The idealists borrowed this, as they did any other Aristotelian dictum they could harmonize with their Platonism. Cf. Davies:

"From thence this power (understanding) the shapes of things abstracts,

And them within her passive part receives;
Which are enlightened by that part which acts,
And so the forms of single things perceives."

Davies, op. cit. I, 76.

²Aristotle, De Anima, III, 8, 3. Translation by Hicks. Ed. cit. p. 145.

Aristotle's immediate disciples therefore relegated the theory of the active reason to the realm of speculation, and tended towards a materialistic explanation of the rational powers.¹ And again in the Renaissance, Pomponatius maintained that Aristotle did not teach the immortality of the soul, inasmuch as he had denied the possibility of the separate existence of the active reason.²

Therefore, although Aristotle in places recognized the dualism on which the "spiritualistic" psychology was based, his empiricism tended to obscure it or explain it away. And it was only because his ideas were later modified and interpreted by Neo-Platonism that they could be harmonized with Christian thought. Immortality was, in fact, historically as well as logically, a Platonic idea, and its champions before the Middle Ages were all men of the Platonic tradition, -- Plotinus, Porphyry, Gregory of Nyssa, Nemesisius and Augustine.

"Every mediaeval and every later Alexandrian interpretation of Aristotle," says Douglas, "had been coloured by Neo-Platonism. The idea of the individual soul as a substance, separate and self-existent, which prevailed with practical uniformity in the orthodox

¹Ravaisson, Métaphysique d'Aristote, II, 50-51: "Dans Théophraste, dans ses contemporains Cléarque, Aristoxène, et Dicéarque, dans Straton, une double tendance se manifeste de plus en plus, d'une part à délaisser dans sa solitude le principe hyperphysique de l'acte et de la pensée pure, unique objet de la philosophie première; de l'autre, dans la physique, à unir intimement la pensée, l'âme, la forme intelligible avec le mouvement, la matière, la puissance." Quoted by Douglas, A.H., Pietro Pomponazzi, Cambridge (1910). p.11.

²Ferri, L., La Psicologia di Pietro Pomponazzi, Rome (1876). pp.63-76. Among the passages Ferri quotes is the following from De Immortalitate Animae: "...ad inseparabilitatem concludendam sufficit secundum Aristotelem quod sit vel virtus organica, vel si non organica, saltem quod sine objecto corporali non possit exire in opus; dicit enim lex. 12 lib. 1 De Anima, quod sive intellectus sit phantasia, sive non sit sine phantasia, non contingit ipsum separari." p.65, n.

schools from patristic down to modern times, can be traced historically through the theology of Augustine back to the influence of the Alexandrian thinkers who first expressed Platonic conceptions in the forms of the Aristotelian logic."¹

It is surprising that so eminent and influential a champion of spiritualistic psychology as Augustine should never have been mentioned by students of Davies.

Augustine, says Ferraz, "est peut-être de tous les Pères celui qui l'a développée avec le plus d'ampleur et qui l'a discutée de la manière la plus forte et la plus rationnelle... Il faut remonter jusqu'à Plotin et descendre jusqu'à Descartes pour trouver ce redoutable problème de la spiritualité de l'âme soulevé par un esprit aussi net et aussi vigoureux, et envisagé sous toutes ses faces avec une attention aussi opinionâtre et aussi pénétrante."²

Like Davies, Augustine based his spiritual philosophy on the immediate observation of his conscious processes. The author of *Nosce Teipsum*, though too much a man of the world to share all the spiritual longings of Augustine, did share his conception of the method and problem of philosophy: "Noli foras ire; in te ipsum redi: in interiore homine habitat veritas."³ With what dialectical

¹Douglas, op. cit. pp.6-7.

Cf.: "Ein deutlicher Ausdruck für die Tendenzen der spätpatristischen Psychologie sind die Lehren Nemesius', des Bischofs von Emesa (um 430). Gegen den Materialismus und gegen die aristotelische Entelechienlehre verfißt dieser einen ausgesprochenen Dualismus von Leib und Seele, der sich mit der Definition der Seele als einer unkörperlichen, für sich bestehenden Substanz zufrieden gibt." Klemm, Otto, Geschichte der Psychologie, Leipzig (1911). p. 21.

²Ferraz, op. cit. pp. 42, 69.

³Windelband, History of Philosophy, trans. Tufts, N.Y. (1893). p. 276. Elsewhere Augustine expressed as the aim of his philosophy: "deum et animam scire cupio." Max Dessoir, Geschichte der Neueren Deutschen Psychologie, Berlin (1902). I, 11.



skill Augustine applied the introspective method is apparent from the following remarkable passage, which anticipates even Descartes:

"Since we treat of the nature of the mind, let us remove from our consideration all knowledge which is received from without, through the senses of the body; and attend more carefully to the position which we have laid down, that all minds know and are certain concerning themselves. For men certainly have doubted whether the power of living, of remembering, of understanding, of willing, of thinking, of knowing, of judging, be of air, or of fire, or of the brain, or of the blood, or of atoms, or besides the usual four elements of a fifth kind of body, I know not what; or whether the combining or tempering together of this our flesh itself has power to accomplish these things. And one has attempted to establish this, and another to establish that. Yet who ever doubts that he himself lives, and remembers, and understands, and wills, and thinks, and knows, and judges; if he doubts, he remembers why he doubts; if he doubts, he understands that he doubts; if he doubts, he wishes to be certain; if he doubts, he thinks; if he doubts, he knows that he does not know; if he doubts, he judges that he ought not to assent rashly. Whosoever therefore doubts about anything else, ought not to doubt of all these things; which if they were not, he would not be able to doubt of anything."¹

Although he never wrote a systematic treatise on the soul, Augustine discussed in various places all phases of mental life, and from his writings a complete psychology can be gathered. Naturally, he used much of the terminology which Aristotle had con-

¹Augustine, On the Trinity, Book X, Chap. X. Trans. Haddan. Edinburgh (1873). p.256. -- Cf. Davies:

"And though some impious wits do questions moue,
And doubt if Soules immortall be, or no;
That doubt their immortalitie doth proue,
Because they seeme immortall things to know....

So, when the Soule mounts with so high a wing,
As of eternall things she doubts can moue;
Shee proofes of her eternitie doth bring,
Euen when she striues the contrary to proue."

Davies, op. cit. I, 95-96.

tributed to the science. But he was no Aristotelian. Siebeck, the most eminent historian of psychology, calls him, in contrast to Aristotle, the "first modern man."

"Unter den bedeutenden Persönlichkeiten des Altertums," he says, "dürften kaum zwei so entgegengesetzte Charaktere zu finden sein, wie Aristoteles und Augustin.... Für Aristoteles, den Hellenen, ist das Seelenleben nur soweit interessant, als es sich nach auszen kehrt, und dazu dient, die Welt theoretisch und praktisch zu umspannen; für Augustin, den ersten modernen Menschen, hat die Betrachtung desselben nur Wert, sofern aus ihm sich die Innerlichkeit des persönlichen Lebens als etwas von der₁Auszenwelt im Grunde Unabhängiges begreifen lässt."

In the later Middle Ages Augustine was widely read among the Nominalists and the Mystics, who had in common an aversion to the intellectualism of Thomas Aquinas. He stimulated their tendency towards a spiritual mode of thought, based on a very distinct dualism of mind and body; he confirmed their belief that the moral life depends more on the will of man than on his intellect; and he taught them the art of observing the processes of the inner life, on which especially the mystics concentrated their attention.² With the Reformation there was a general revival of Augustine as well as of other Patristic writers. And in a little manual on metaphysics, Richard Crakanthorp, who was an Oxford fellow in 1598, at the same time as Davies was writing his poem there, refers to Augustine, along with Aristotle and Aquinas, as an authority on metaphysics.³ One might therefore reasonably have expected to see Augustine

¹Siebeck, H., Die Anfänge der neueren Psychologie in der Scholastik, in Zeitschrift für Philosophie und phil. Kritik, vol.39 (1888). pp. 188, 191.

²Siebeck, op. cit.

³Crakanthorp, R., Introductio in Metaphysicam, Oxford (1619).

mentioned among those whose works Davies had consulted before writing Nosce Teipsum.

It was no accident that Augustine, who formed such a direct contrast to Aristotle, should in the Middle Ages have inspired some of the opposition to Aquinas, the "Christian Aristotle." The Thomistic doctrine of the soul was a revival of Aristotle's theory of Form and Matter, modified by Neo-Platonism and developed by the medieval conflict with Arabian philosophy. Thomas defined the soul as the Form of the body, united with the body and making of it a living organism. But there are several kinds of forms; the forms of the lower organisms, plants and animals, can exist only with the bodies; higher forms, the "subsistent intelligences," may exist without bodies; the subsistent intelligence of man is united with the body in this life, but will exist without it in a future life. As forma separata the soul is by definition immaterial, simple, indestructible and immortal.¹

This doctrine of the forms appears in only one stanza in Nosce Teipsum:

"Yet of the formes, she holds the first degree,
That are to grosse materiall bodies knit;
Yet shee her selfe is bodillesse and free;
And though confin'd, is almost infinite."²

Even there it has no logical relation to the context, and its force is more that of a metaphor than of a doctrine. Davies defined the soul, as we have seen, as a spiritual substance, and in following

¹ Rickaby, J., God and His Creatures, London (1906). pp. 109-182.
Frohschammer, J., Die Philosophie des Thomas von Aquino, Leipzig (1889). pp. 349-379.

² Davies, op. cit. I, 41.

this somewhat crude conception of the Church Fathers, he escaped the equally difficult and untenable subtleties of Aquinas. He was, in fact, no Thomist. Though a rationalist rather than a mystic, he seems to have had little taste for the Thomistic dialectic from first principles.¹

The exhaustion of Medieval philosophy, discussed in the first chapter, led to an age of eclecticism in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Aristotelian and Thomistic theory of the soul as Form became the subject of a fierce controversy in Italy between the Averroists and the Alexandrists, the most important result of which was the eminence of the notorious Pomponatius, who denied the immortality of the soul as a philosopher, but as a Christian gave it lip-service.² But the psychology of the Renaissance ignored, on the whole, this metaphysical theory, and especially in Northern Europe preferred the introspective method of Augustine, which had been continued by the Nominalists and Mystics. In matters of detail it laid all the past under contribution, even Aristotle and Aquinas; and out of manifold sources was developed a stereotyped treatment of the problem of the nature of the soul and its immortality, which for two centuries was repeated with greater or less elaboration, but with no important modification.

As an early illustration of this Renaissance spiritualistic psychology we may quote Nicolas of Cusa (1401-1464). Nicolas,

¹Cf., for instance, on the origin of the soul: Davies, I, 47-ff. and Rickaby, pp. 163-ff.; or Davies' replies to objections against immortality, with Rickaby, 155-ff.

²Douglas, op. cit. Chaps. II-IV.
Charbonnel, J. R., La Pensée Italienne au XVIe Siècle et le Courant Libertain, Paris (1919). Chap. III.

the author of De Docta Ignorantia, imbued with the scepticism of the Nominalists, and in some ways more modern than medieval, was no disciple of Aquinas. His definition of the soul, like that of Davies, was Patristic.

"Die Seele," he says, "ist eine unkörperliche Substanz und die Kraft zu verschiedenen Fähigkeiten, Sie ist die Sinnenwahrnehmung (sensualitas), sie ist das Einbildungsvermögen (ipsa est imaginatio), sie ist Verstand und Vernunft (ratio et intelligentia). Sinnenwahrnehmung und Einbildung übt sie im Körper aus, Verstand und Vernunft ausserhalb dem Körper. Sinnenwahrnehmung, Einbildungskraft, Verstand und Vernunft haben Eine und dieselbe Substanz, wiewohl der Sinn nicht Einbildung, Verstand oder Vernunft ist. Ebenso ist die Einbildungskraft nicht Verstand und Vernunft oder eines der andern Vermögen. Es sind verschiedene Auffassungsweisen in der Seele, von denen die eine nicht auch die andere sein kann."¹

The Cardinal's proof of the immateriality of the soul recalls passages in Nosce Teipsum:

"Die Fähigkeit für Weisheit und Unsterblichkeit ersehen wir daraus, weil der Geist sich zu dem hinneigt, was unzerstörlich ist, und es erfasst, wie wir es an den Künsten sehen; er fasst die unsterbliche Fähigkeit in sich, zu zählen und zu messen. Das konnte er nicht, hätte er nicht eine Seele, welche sich aus dem particularen und zerstörlchen Erfahrungsmaszigem zu dem universellen Verständniss desselben erheben und so sich eine Kunst erwerben kann. Diese Fähigkeit der Seele aber ist ein Beweis, dass sie nicht an das zerstörlche Instrument des Körpers und an die Organe der Sinne gebunden ist. Sie ist daher fähig für Wissenschaft und Künste und Weisheit, Dinge, die von allem

¹Scharpff, F. A., Des Cardinals und Bischofs Nicolas von Cusa wichtigste Schriften in deutschen Uebersetzung, Freiburg (1862). p. 223. Cf. Davies (ed. cit. p.63):

"So in our little World: this soule of ours,
Being onely one, and to one body tyed,
Doth use, on diuers obiects diuers powers,
And so are her effects diuersified."

Particularen und Zerstörlichen frei sind. Die Seele zergeht desshalb nicht, wenn auch der Körper zergeht, da sie nicht von ihm abhängt, wie das Sehen vom Auge, das aufhört, wenn das Auge, an welches es gebunden war, zerstört ist. Da die Sehkraft in der Seele bleibt, so könnte sie wieder sehen, sobald das Auge wieder hergestellt ist. Wir erkennen auch in der Einbildungskraft eine höhere Art von Sinn, weil unser Einbilden bei Abwesenheit eines Gegenstandes genauer ist, als die Sinnenerkenntniss. Indessen irrt die Einbildung oft, hinsichtlich der Wahrheit, wie wenn wir uns einbilden, die Gegenfüßler fallen. Es gibt desshalb eine genauere Kraft, welche die Einbildung corrigirt -- der Verstand, welcher uns sagt, jenes Fallen wäre ein in die Höhe Steigen des Schweren, woraus er Schliesst, dass jene eben so wenig fallen können, als wir in die Höhe steigen...etc.¹

As this citation of parallel passages cannot be complete, one more, on the relation of the soul to the senses, must suffice:

¹Scharpff, op. cit. pp. 462-3.
Cf. Davies:

"When she from sundry acts, one skill doth draw,
Gathering from diuers fights one art of warre,
From many cases like, one rule of Law;
These her collections, not the Senses are." (p.30).

"When she defines, argues, diuides, compounds,
Considers vertue, vice, and generall things,
And marrying diuers principles and grounds,
Out of their match a true conclusion brings.

These actions in her closet all alone,
(Retir'd within her selfe) she doth fulfill;
Use of her bodie's organs she hath none,
When she doth use the powers of Wit and Will." (pp.31-2).

"But when she sits to iudge the good and ill,
And to discerne betwixt the false and true;
She is not guided by the Senses' skill,
But doth each thing in her own mirrour view.

Then she the Senses checks, which oft do erre,
And euen against their false reports decrees;
And oft she doth condemne what they preferre,
For with a power aboue the Sense, she sees." (p.34).

"Wenn der Geist die sinnliche Erkenntnisskraft ins Auge fasst, so findet er, dass dieselbe zwar, soferne sie von einem mangelhaften Organe abhängt, mangelhaft ist, nicht aber als Seelenvermögen, weil sie nach Herstellung des Organs wieder so gut wie früher (ehe dasselbe krankhaft geworden) wahrnimmt, ohne dass eine neue Fähigkeit, ein neues Wahrnehmungsvermögen geschaffen worden wäre. Ebenso verhält es sich mit der Einbildungskraft: bei einem minder guten Organe sind die Bilder der vernünftigen Seele minder lebendig; auf eine Zeit lang kann der Mensch, wenn das Organ gehemmt ist, das Gedächtniss verlieren, und dann wieder erhalten. Es bleibt also in der Seele die Gedächtnisskraft, wiewohl ihre Wirksamkeit cessirt, die sie ohne ein gesundes Organ nicht ausüben kann. Wie der Schreiber ohne Feder nicht schreiben kann, so ist auch die Verstandesthätigkeit mangelhaft, wenn die Thätigkeit des Organs leidet, obwohl jene im Geiste fortbesteht. Während die Vernunft bei ihrer Anschauung des vernünftig Erkennbaren keines sinnlichen Organs bedarf, so ist dagegen der Geist bei der Erkenntniss der sinnlichen Dinge an ein Organ gebunden, dergleichen bei der Einbildung, da diese sinnlicher Natur ist. Auch der discursive Verstand bedarf, da er das denkend durchgeht, was er aus der Sinnenwelt geschöpft hat, der Sinnenorgane, die das Mehr oder Weniger genau auffassen und zum Gebrauche geübt sind. Nur bei der Anschauung des vernünftig Erkennbaren, das durch keinen sinnlichen Gegenstand zu fixiren ist, weil seine Einfachheit und das Unconcrete seiner absoluten Natur über das Gebiet der Sinnenwelt hinausgeht, bedarf der Geist kein Sinnenorgan, sondern nur seine innere, der Natur des zu Erkennenden conforme Einfachheit.¹

¹Scharpff, op. cit. p.464.
Cf. Davies:

"These questions make a subtile argument,
To such as thinke both sense and reason one;
To whom nor agent, from the instrument,
Nor power of working from the work is known....

For, if that region of the tender braine,
Where th'inward sense of Fantasie should sit,
And the outward senses gatherings should retain,
By Nature, or by chance, become unfit;

Either at first uncapable it is,
And so few things, or none at all receiues;
Or mard by accident, which haps amisse
And so amisse it euery thing perceiues....

But purge the humors, and the rage appease,
Which this distemper in the fansie wrought;

Nicolas of Cusa was, however, quite certainly not the source of Nosce Teipsum. These passages have been cited merely to illustrate the tradition to which Davies was indebted. In the sixteenth century this tradition was turned to polemical uses against the general sceptical movement. Unbelief was imperilling all the chief doctrines of Christianity, and the denial of any survival after death was one of the most dangerous tenets of the "Epicureans" and "Libertines." Philosophy was called from her academic seclusion to confound their impieties. A new species of popular treatise accordingly began to come from the press, the nature of which was usually indicated in title or sub-title. Two such French treatises had an especially wide circulation in England as well as in France. Philippe de Mornay's De la verité de la religion Chrestienne, Contre les Athées, Epicuriens, Payens, Juifs, Mahumedanistes, et autres Infidèles, published at Antwerp in 1581,

Then shall the Wit, which never had disease,
Discourse, and iudge discretely, as it ought." (pp.100-2)

"Doubtlesse the bodie's death when once it dies,
The instruments of sense and life doth kill;
So that she cannot use those faculties,
Although their root rest in her substance still.

But (as the body liuing) Wit and Will
Can iudge and chuse, without the bodie's ayde;
Though on such objects they are working still,
As through the bodie's organs are conuayde:

So, when the body serues her turne no more,
And all her Senses are extinct and gone,
She can discourse of what she learn'd before,
In heauenly contemplations, all alone.

So, if one man well on a lute doth play,
And haue good horsemanship, and Learning's skill
Though both his lute and horse we take away,
Doth he not keep his former learning still?" (p.105)

was reprinted in 1582, 1583 and 1590; a Latin translation appeared in 1583 and was frequently reprinted; an English translation by Sir Philip Sidney was published in 1587, and reprinted in 1592 and 1604. The Second Part of the French Academie, by Peter de la Primaudaye, dealing particularly with the nature and immortality of the soul, was translated in 1594 by "T.B." Only a few years after Davies' poem, Dr. John Dove published a small volume, Atheism Defined and confuted by undeniable arguments (London, 1605), in which he gave fourteen arguments "alleged by naturall Philosophers to prove the immortality of the soul."¹ And at least twice before Davies wrote his poem, immortality had been made the argument of well-known Latin verse. Marcellus Palingenius, in Zodiacus Vitae, published about 1531, devoted one of the twelve books to the nature of the soul and its immortality. It was the powers of the soul that convinced him of its divine nature:

Colligitur tamen ex dictis, ac perspicitur, quod
 Est anima aethereum quiddam, sine corpore vivens,
 Omnia vivificans, cognoscens omnia.....
 Nam si anima et sentit, et cuncta intellegit, ergo
 Non est corporea, aut corpus: quia corpora nulla
 Non terra, unda, aer, ignis, neque condita ab istis,
 Has per se vires retinent. Non est dubitandum
 Esse animam semen quoddam caeleste, Iovisque
 Progenium aeternam, qui tantum cognitionis
 Cessit, ut immensum valeat comprehendere mundum.²

This whole poem had a considerable vogue in England; in the original it was used as a text-book in English secondary schools in the

¹ See abstract in Appendix to chapter. For a list of other translations and original works of similar nature which appeared in England in the sixteenth century, see Robertson, John M., A Short History of Freethought, 2nd ed., New York (1906). II, 27.

² Palingenius, Zodiacus Vitae, Lib. VII, 855-868. Ed. Weise, Leipzig (1832). pp.178-9.

sixteenth century,¹ and it was available to a larger public in the translation by Barnabe Googe. The Italian humanist, Aonius Palearius, published in 1536 a Latin poem, De Immortalitate Animarum, which was often reprinted at the end of Lucretius, as an antidote to the "atheism" of the Epicurean poet.

The learned historian of English philosophy, De Rémusat, once complained of a difficulty, "une difficulté que nous retrouvons souvent en étudiant les philosophes, surtout ceux d'un ordre secondaire. Il faudrait une érudition et une mémoire incomparables pour reconnaître les rares moments où ils sont originaux."² One must conclude from this sketch of the history of spiritual psychology from Plato to Davies, that the research necessary to identify all his direct or ultimate sources would be too great to be justifiable; only a Dante or Goethe is worth so much learning. Nevertheless our study has given us a positive result in indicating the continued vitality as well as the antiquity of the argument against materialism. Davies could certainly not have pretended to the merit of novelty; but there are other merits. Bossuet defined a heretic as a man who has formed an opinion. It was the materialists, the scoffers, the sceptics of the Renaissance who had formed an opinion, who had departed from the true tradition. Davies himself has described what he conceived to be their intellectual and moral character:

"How senselesse then, and dead a soule hath hee,
Which thinks his soule doth with his body die!
Or thinkes not so, but so would haue it bee,
That he might sinne with more securitie.

¹Watson, Foster, The English Grammar Schools to 1660, Cambridge (1908). pp.378-9.

²De Rémusat, Ch., La Philosophie en Angleterre, Paris(1875). I,115.

For though these light and vicious persons say,
 Our Soule is but a smoake, or ayrie blast;
 Which, during life, doth in our nostrils play,
 And when we die, doth turne to wind at last:

Although they say, 'Come let us eat and drinke';
 Our life is but a sparke, which quickly dies;
 Though thus they say, they know not what to think,
 But in their minds ten thousand doubts arise.

Therefore no heretikes desire to spread
 Their light opinions, like these Epicures:
 For so the staggering thoughts are comforted,
 And other men's assent their doubt assures."¹

Davies sought to express with clearness and force those old truths which were doubted by an increasingly large number of his contemporaries. He had communed with the saints of thought; therefore he championed their tradition before an unbelieving age.

III

Parallels from Primaudaye and others

If it is correct in this way to interpret Nosce Teipsum as a re-statement of the traditional argument against materialism, there ought to be marked similarities between it and other treatises contemporary with it. Primaudaye's volume should be especially valuable for such a comparison. His Second Part of the French Academie is, in the English translation, a rambling ill-digested discussion in six hundred pages of the physiology and psychology of man. But its special purpose is to demonstrate the

¹Davies, ed. cit. pp.82-3. Elsewhere he calls them "these light vaine persons" (p.93), "impious wits" (p.95), "these Epicures" (p.99) "this crue" (p.108), "these vaine spirits" (p.110).

immortality of the soul, to refute the atheists. "My companions," so begins the first page of the book, "I greatly bewayle the misery of our age, wherein so many Epicures and Atheists liue, as are dayly discouered amongst us in all estates and callings." And we are apprised very soon as to what kind of knowledge is most valuable both to refute atheists and secure our own salvation.

". . .that sentence which saith, Knowe thy selfe, was not without good reason so much praised and renowned amongst al the ancient Greeke and Latin Philosophers, as that which is worthy to be taken for a heavenly oracle, & a sentence pronounced by the mouth of God. For whosoeuer shall know himselfe well, cannot faile to know God his creator, and to honour him as he ought, if he follow the chiefe end for which man was created, as well as the residue of the creatures . . . For although the knowledge of the rest of the creatures that are in this great visible worlde, will greatly helpe to leade him to the knowledge of God the Creatour, neuerthesse he shall neuer be able to know him well, if withall he know not himselfe. Yea these two knowledges are so ioyned together, that it is a very hard matter to seuer them. For as a man can not know himselfe if he know not God, so he cannot know God wel, if in like sort he know not himselfe. So that I take this for most certain, that neither Astronomy, Geometry, Geography, or Cosmography, nor any other Mathematical science is so necessary for man, as that wherby he may learne to know himselfe wel, & to measure himselfe wel by the measure of his owne nature, that he may thereby know how to contayne himselfe within the limits thereof."¹

¹Primaudaye, ed. cit. pp.10-12. Cf.Davies:

"All things without, which round about we see,
We seeke to knowe, and how therewith to doe;
But that whereby we reason, liue and be,
Within our selues, we strangers are thereto.

We seeke to know the mouing of each spheare,
And the strange cause of th'ebs and flouds of Nile;
But of that clocke within our breasts we beare,
The subtill motions we forget the while.....

I know my life's a paine and but a span,
I know my sense is mockt with euery thing:
And to conclude, I know my selfe a MAN,
Which is a proud, and yet a wretched thing. (pp.20,24).

Both in its purpose and in its method the volume of Primaudaye is therefore a predecessor of Davies' poem.

In details, there are noteworthy differences as well as similarities. Some of the latter will be presented first, in parallel passages.

Sight.

"Let us knowe therefore, that the eies were giuen of God to men to cause them to see, and to be as it were their watch-towers & sentinels, the guides & leaders of the whole body: as also they are as it were the chiefe windowes of the body, or rather of the soule, which is lodged within it.... Therefore by good right they beare rule among the senses, and all the other members of the body, as being their guides. For they are giuen to man chiefly to guide and leade him to the knowledge of God, by the contemplation of his goodly works, which appeare principally in the heauens and in al the order thereof, and whereof we can haue no true knowledge and instruction by any other sense but by the eies. For without them who could euer haue noted the diuers course and motions of the celestially bodies? yea wee see by experience, that the Mathematicall sciences, among which Astronomy is one of the chiefest, cannot be well and rightly shewed and taught, as many others may, without the helpe of the eies: because a man must make their demonstrations by figures, which are their letters and images. I passe ouer many other Sciences, as that of the Anatomy of mans body and such like.... Wherefore seeing the bodily senses are the chiefest masters of man, in whose house the spirite and understanding is lodged and enclosed, the greatest and first honour is by good right to be giuen to the eies and sight. Likewise it is the first mistresse that prouoked men forward to the studie and searching out of science and wisdom. His (God's) spirituall light hee hath infused into spirituall creatures, and bodily light into bodily creatures, to the ende that by this benefite the spirites might haue understanding, and the eies sight. So that Angelles and the spirites of men, which are spirituall and inuisible creatures, are illuminated by the meanes of understanding, with that spirituall and heavenly light whereof God hath made them partakers: as the bodies of liuing creatures, and chiefly of man are illuminated with the corporall light of the Sunne by meanes of the eies."

Primaudaye, pp.68-69.

"First, the two eyes that haue the seeing power,
 Stand as one watchman, spy, or sentinell;
 Being plac'd aloft, within the head's high tower;
 And though both see, yet both but one thing tell.

These mirrors take into their little space
 The formes of moone and sun, and euery starre;
 Of euery body and of euery place,
 Which with the World's wide armes embraced are:

Yet their best obiect, and their noblest use,
 Hereafter in another World will be;
 When God in them shall heauenly light infuse,
 That face to face they may their Maker see.

Here are they guides, which doe the body lead,
 Which else would stumble in eternal night;
 Here in this world they do much knowledge read,
 And are the casements which admit most light."
 Davies, pp.65-6.

Hearing.

"For this cause the eares are not pierced outright, but their holes are made winding in, like the shell of a snayle, whose forme they represent, so that one cannot thrust straight foorth so much as a little threede.... ouer great soundes would marre the instrument of hearing, if they were not distributed and compassed according to the capacity therof. For there must alwaies be an answerable and apt proportion between the sense, the thing subiect to sense, and the meane by which the sense is made. Hereupon it falleth out often, that many become deafe by hearing ouer great soundes, whereof wee haue experience in Smithes, amongst whome many are thicke of hearing, because their eares are continually dulled with the noyse and sound of their hammers and anuiles.... Therefore as the eies are iudge of light and colours, and by that meanes bring great pleasure and profite to men, so the eares iudge of sounds and of the voyce, of notes, harmony, and of melodies, whereby man receiueh commoditie and delight.... how many instruments are there of most excellent and melodious musicke, what voices and pleasant songs, framed very cunningly, and with great grace and harmonie by the arte of musicke?.... But aboue all, the chieftest profite that the eares bring to men, is by the meanes of speeche, whereby they communicate one with another all their conceits, imaginations, thoughtes and counsailes, so that without them the whole life of man would bee not onely deafe, but dumbe also

and very unperfect, as if man had neyther tongue, mouth nor speeche. And on the other side, seeing man hath alwayes neede of doctrine and instruction, albeit all the other senses helpe him therein, neuerthesse, none is so fitte or more seruicable to this purpose, next to the eyes, then the eares.... After the knowledge of things is found out, and artes begunne by meanes of the sight,then the sense of hearing teacheth a great deale more, both greater matters and sooner...." etc.

Primaudaye, pp. 81-83.

"These wickets of the Soule are plac't on hie
Because all sounds doe lightly mount aloft;
And that they may not pierce too violently,
They are delaied with turnes, and windings oft.

For should the voice directly strike the braine,
It would astonish and confuse it much;
Therefore these plaits and folds the sound restraine,
That it the organ may more gently touch....

And though this sense first gentle Musicke found,
Her proper obiect is the speech of men;
But that speech chiefly which God's heraulds sound,
When their tongs utter what His Spirit did pen....

Thus by the organs of the Eye and Eare,
The Soule with knowledge doth her selfe endue;
Thus she her prison, may with pleasure beare,
Hauing such prospects, all the world to view.

These conduit-pipes of knowledge feed the mind,
But th'other three attend the body still;
For by their seruices the Soule doth find,
What things are to the body, good or ill."

Davies, pp. 67-68.

Taste.

The tongue "must first iudge of tastes & discerne between good & bad meat, and between good and bad drinckes, to the end, that whatsoeuer is good for the nourishment of the body, may be kept and that which is bad, relected.... But wee are to know this thing further, that men iudge by their taste, not onely of such things as may serue to nourish them, but also of medicines.... Nowe as hee cannot liue without eating and drinking, so it is requisite

that he eate and drinke with that moderation,
 that he take in no more meate and drinke then he
 ought to doe. For if hee take too much, in
 stead of being satisfied, he shal be burdened,
 and in stead of preseruing his life, hee will
 kill himselfe.... But the danger that commeth
 by not keeping a mediocrity, is a great deale
 more to be feared on the one side then on the other.
 For there are but fewe that breake not square oftener
 in eating and drinking too much then to little."

Primaudaye, pp.103,109,116.

"The bodie's life with meates and ayre is fed,
 Therefore the soule doth use the tasting power,
 In veines, which through the tongue and palate spread,
 Distinguish euery relish, sweet and sower.

This is the bodie's nurse; but since man's wit
 Found th'art of cookery, to delight his sense;
 More bodies are consumed and kild with it,
 Then with the sword, famine, or pestilence."

Davies, pp.68-69.

Smell.

"Neyther doe those thinges which serue for
 delectation, alwayes bring profite, but sometimes
 the contrarie, principally through their fault
 that knowe not howe to use them moderately. For
 they are so subiect to their pleasures, that they
 can neuer keepe measure in anything, as wee see by
 experience, especially in these two senses of taste
 and smell. For as the ordinary meates satisfie not
 the delicate appetites of men, but they must haue
 new dainties daily inuented to prouoke their
 appetite further, and to cause them to eate and
 drinke more then is needefull, to their great hurt:
 so men are not contented with naturall odours which
 nature bringeth foorth of it selfe, but nowe they
 must haue muskes and perfumes, with infinite varietie
 of distilled waters and artificial smelles, in
 regard of which, naturall sauors are nothing set
 by. And yet if they were used with sobriety,
 there were no cause of reprehension.... Not to
 seeke far offe for examples, we haue the testimonies
 of the holy Euangelists, as our Lord Iesus Christ
 himselfe, who was neither nice nor voluptuous, but
 the perfect paterne of al sobriety and temperance,
 did not reiect nor condemne pretious ointments and
 sweete odours, but sometime permitted the use of

them upon his owne person. Moreouer, it is certaine, that the animal spirites of the braine are greatly relieued and recreated by those good and naturall smells that are conueyed unto them by means of the nose, and of the sense of smelling placed therein: ...For the spirits of the head are subtile, pure, and very neate, so that sweete smelles are good for them, and stinking sauors contrary unto them."

Primaudaye, pp.120-121.

"This sense is also mistresse of an Art,
Which to soft people sweete perfumes doth sell;
Though this deare Art doth little good impart,
Sith they smell best, that doe of nothing smell.

And yet good sents doe purifie the braine,
Awake the fancie, and the wits refine;
Hence old Deuotion, incense did ordaine
To make mens' spirits apt for thoughts diuine."
Davies, p. 69.

The Common Sense.

"The Common sense is so called, because it is the first of all the internall senses of which we are to speake, as also the Price & Lord of all the externall senses, who are his messengers and seruants to minister and make relation unto him of things in common. For it receiueth all the images and shapes that are offered and brought unto it by them, yea all the kindes and resemblances of materiall things, which they haue receiued only from without, as a glasse doth: and al this for no other cause, but that they should discerne and seuer euery thing according to its owne nature & propertie, and afterward communicate them to the internall senses. For although all the knowledge that is in the minde of man proceedeth not from the outward senses, as we shewed in the beginning of our speech, neuertheles they are created of God, to the end they should send to the understanding the similitudes of things without, and be the messengers of the minde, and witnesses of experience: and also to the ende they should awaken and stirre up the minde to behold and marke the things that are without it, that by considering of them, it may iudge of, and correct the faultes. Wee must then obserue, that the externall senses

haue no iudgement of that which they outwardly receiue but by meanes of the common sense, unto which they make relation, and then that iudgeth: so that they ende where that beginneth."

Primaudaye, pp. 154-5.

"These are the outward instruments of Sense,
These are the guards which euery thing must passe
Ere it approach the mind's intelligence,
Or touch the Fantasie, Wit's looking-glasse.

And yet these porters, which all things admit,
Themselues perceiue not, nor discern the things:
One common power doth in the forehead sit,
Which all their proper formes together brings.

For all those nerues, which spirits of Sence doe beare,
And to those outward organs spreading goe;
United are, as in a center there,
And there this power those sundry formes doth know.

Those outward organs present things receiue,
This inward Sense doth absent things retaine;
Yet straight transmits all formes shee doth perceiue,
Unto a higher region of the braine.

Davies, pp. 70-71.

The Fantasy.

"This faculty therefore and vertue of the soule is called Fantasie, because the visions, kindes, and images of such things as it receiueth, are diuersly framed therein, according to the formes and shapes that are brought to the Common Sense.... Moreover this facultie of the fantasie is sudden & so farre from stayednes, that euen in the time of sleep it hardly taketh any rest, but is alwaies occupied in dreaming & doting, yea euen about those things which neuer haue bin, shalbe, or can be. For it staieth not in that which is shewed unto it by the senses that serue it, but taketh what pleaseth it, and addeth thereunto or diminisheth, changeth and rechangeth, mingleth and unmingleth, so that it cutteth asunder and seweth up againe as it listeth. So that there is nothing but the fantasie will imagine and counterfaite, if it haue any matter and foundation to worke upon...."

Primaudaye, p.155.

"....Fantasie, neere hand-maid to the mind,
Sits and beholds, and doth discerne them all;
Compounds in one, things diuers in their kind;
Compares the black and white, the great and small...

This busie power is working day and night;
For when the outward senses rest doe take,
A thousand dreames, fantasticall and light,
With fluttering wings doe keepe her still awake."
Davies, pp.71-2.

The Sensitive Memory.

"Forasmuch as the memory is as it were the Register and Chancery Court of all the other senses, the images of all things brought and committed unto it by them, are to be imprinted therein.... Therefore it is not without the great wisdom & prouidence of God, that the seate & shop thereof is in the hindermost part of the head, because it must looke to the things that are past. So that we haue in that part as it were a spirituall eye, which is much more excellent and profitable, then if wee had bodily eyes there, as we haue before, or else a face before and an other behinde, as the Poets fained that Ianus had.

Primaudaye, pp. 161-2.

"Yet alwayes all may not afore her bee;
Successiue, she this and that intends;
Therefore such formes as she doth cease to see,
To Memorie's large volume shee commends.

The lidger-booke lies in the braine behinde,
Like Ianus' eye, which in his poll was set;
The lay-man's tables, store-house of the mind,
Which doth remember much, and much forget."

Davies, p. 72.

Reason and Understanding.

"In the minde of man there shineth alwaies this naturall light that is giuen unto him aboue that which beasts haue, I mean Reason, which serueth to guide the soule and spirite amidst the darknesse of errour and ignorance, to the ende they may be

able to discerne trueth from falsehood, and the true Good from the false, as wee see the light serueth the eyes to keepe us, and to cause us to see in darknesse. Therefore we sayde before, that there was a double discourse of reason in man; whereof the one is Theoricall and Speculatiue, which hath Trueth for his ende, and hauing found it goeth no farther. The other is Practical, hauing Good for his end, which being found it stayeth not there, but passeth forward to the Will, which God hath ioyned unto it, to the end it should loue, desire and follow after the Good, and contrariwise hate, eschew and turne away from euill. Therefore when the question ariseth of contemplation, reason hath Trueth for her utmost bounds, and when she is to come into action, she draweth towards Good, and hauing conferred together that which is true and good, she pronounceth iudgement. So that reason considereth of thinges with great deliberation, and beeing sometimes in doubt which way to take, shee stayeth and returneth as it were to her selfe, and maketh many discourses before shee iudge and conclude.... Imagination and fantasie, being neerer to the corporall senses, draw the soule to those thinges that are bodily: but the reason and the spirite pricke it forward, and cause it to lift up it selfe to more excellent thinges. For the spirite (which the Philosophers expresse by Understanding) mounteth up unto those thinges that cannot be knowen nor comprehended of imagination and fantasie, nor of any other sense."

Primaudaye, pp. 171-2.

"The Wit, the pupill of the Soule's cleare eye,
And in man's world, the onely shining starre;
Lookes in the mirror of the Fantasie,
Where all the gatherings of the Senses are....

But after, by discoursing to and fro,
Anticipating, and comparing things;
She doth all universall natures know,
And all effects into their causes brings.

When she rates things and moues from ground to ground,
The name of Reason she obtaines by this;
But when by Reason she the truth hath found,
And standeth fixt, she UNDERSTANDING is.

Davies, pp. 75-6.

Wit and Will.

"Nowe although we saide before, that reason helde the soueraignty amongst the powers, vertues and offices of the soule, yet wee must know, that reason raigneth not ouer Will as Lady and Princesse, but onely as Mistresse to teach and shew it, what it ought to followe, and what to flie from. For the will hath no light of it selfe, but is lightened by the minde, that is to say, by reason and iudgement, which are ioyned with it, not to gouerne and turne it from one side to another by commandement and authoritie, either by force or violence, as a Prince or Magistrate, but as a counsailer or director, to admonish and to conduct it. And so the will desireth or refuseth nothing, which reason hath not first shewed that it is to be desired or disdayned. Therefore the act of Will proceedeth indeede from Will, but it is iudged of and counselled by reason: ...And as concerning the naturall disposition of the Will, it is to will that good which is truely good, or that which seemeth to bee so: and to shunne euill, eyther that which is euill in deede, or that which it thinketh to bee so. Nowe if shee choose and followe euill for good, it followeth not therefore, but that shee would alwayes followe the good, as that which properly appertayneth unto her, and reiect euill as heremie. But the reason why shee maketh choyce of euill for good, is because shee is deceiued, taking one for another, which commeth to passe through the ignorance and corruption that is in the nature of man.... Whereupon it followeth, that our Will is at libertie and free, and cannot bee constrayned: yea God the Creatour and Lorde thereof woulde haue it so, otherwise it shoulde not bee a Will. It is verie true, that it followeth reason alwayes, because the Will hath no light of it selfe, but onely so farre forth as it receiueth the same from reason, which guideth and directeth it. And therefore it neuer applieth it selfe to any thing whatsoever, but hath reason alwayes for a guide, whome it followeth. Neuertheless it is not so subiect thereunto as that it may compell it to followe all the reasons that are propounded unto it by reason, or tye it to any of them, but that alwayes shee hath her libertie to make choyse of which reason shee please, out of all those that are set before her."

Primaudaye, pp. 204-6.

"And as this wit should goodnesse truely know,
 We haue a Will, which that true good should chuse;
 Though Will do oft (when wit false formes doth show)
 Take ill for good, and good for ill refuse.

Will puts in practice what the Wit deuiseeth:
 Will euer acts, and Wit contemplates still;
 And as from Wit, the power of wisdom riseth,
 All other vertues daughters are of Will.

Will is the prince, and Wit the counsellor,
 Which doth for common good in Counsell sit;
 And when Wit is resolu'd, Will lends her power
 To execute what is aduis'd by Wit.

Wit is the mind's chief iudge, which doth controule
 Of Fancie's Court the iudgements, false and vaine;
 Will holds the royall septer in the soule
 And on the passions of the heart doth raigne.

Will is as free as any emperour,
 Naught can restraine her gentle libertie;
 No tyrant, nor no torment, hath the power,
 To make us will, when we unwilling bee."

Davies, pp. 78-9.

These passages have been quoted to this tedious length because they show conclusively that Primaudaye and Davies had a common purpose of popularizing and Christianizing psychology, and used for the purpose identical figures of speech, illustrations, and moral turns. It would be unprofitable to cite further, from their restatement of the time-worn arguments for immortality. Only very great minds can be original on that theme, and similarities in thought are only to be expected. But it is worthy of notice when some of Davies' more striking and elaborate similes are found, not only in Primaudaye but, before him, in De Mornay. The three following parallels were not coincidences.

I.

"Water in conduit pipes, can rise no higher
 Then the wel-head, from whence it first doth spring:
 Thensith to eternall God shee (the soul) doth aspire,
 Shee cannot be but an eternall thing.

Davies, p. 85.

"And so that may bee saide of our soule, which is spoken of a spring of water, namely, that it ascendeth as much upwarde as it descendeth downeward, but can goe no higher. For when a man would carie the water of a spring any whither, and would haue it mount upwarde, it will be an easie matter to bring it as high as the spring-head from whence it floweth: but no higher, except it bee forced by some other meane then by its owne course and naturall vertue. Notwithstanding it will easily descend lower. And so it fareth with our spirite. For as it came from God, so it is able to mount againe to the knowledge of him, and no higher: but it descendeth a great deale lower."

Primaudaye, p.538.

II.

An answer to the objection that no witness has returned from beyond the grave:

"Fond men! If we beleeeue that men doe liue
 Under the Zenith of both frozen Poles,
 Though none come thence aduertisement to giue;
 Why beare we not the like faith of our soules?"

Davies, p.109.

"Nowe before wee make answeere to so friuolous and false an argument, I would gladly demaund of them, whether there were nothing at all of those new-found Ilands, (which were lately found in our time) before they were discouered by them who not only were neuer there, but did not so much as once heare of them before. For no body went thither from hence, neither did any come hither from thence: so that there was no more intelligence betweene them and us, then betweene the liuing and the dead, or betweene them that are altogether of another world: therefore also their countrey is called the New world. Nowe then shall it be thought, that this people were not at all, because they were not knowne of us, nor their manners and kinde of life?

Primaudaye, p. 532.

"Un autre dit, Si les ames viuent, que ne le nous viennent elles dire? & pense bien auoir rencontré, ie ne sçay quoy de bien subtil. Mais quelle consequence, Nul n'est venu depuis tant d'années des Indes à nous, il n'y a donc point d'Indes? Ains par mesme argument ne serions nous point, nous qui n'y allions point."

De Mornay, De la Verite de la Religion Chrestienne, Leyden (1651). p. 316.

III.

"See how man's Soule against it selfe doth striue:
Why should we not haue other meanes to know?
As children while within the wombe they liue,
Feed by the nauill: here they feed not so.

These children, if they had some use of sense,
And should by chance their mothers' talking heare;
That in short time they shall come forth from thence,
Would feare their birth more then our death we feare.

They would cry out, 'If we this place shall leaue,
Then shall we breake our tender nauill strings;
How shall we then our nourishment receiue,
Sith our sweet food no other conduit brings?

Davies, pp. 107-8.

"Moreouer, as a childe commeth out when hee is borne, so doth a man when he dieth. And in comming forth both of them enter into a new and unacquainted light, & into a place where they finde all things much altered and farre differing from those which they used to haue in their other kind of liuing. For which cause both the one & the other being troubled and scared with this nouelty, are unwilling to come forth of their clapper & to forsake their closet, were it not that they are urged and constrained thereunto by the arte, lawes, & rights of nature, whereby God hath better prouided for our affaires then wee ourselues could conceiue or comprehend, both in our natiuity & life, & also in our death. The ignorance whereof causeth our spirit to abhorre the departure out of this life, in regard of this great change that is therein, because it knoweth not what good is brought to it thereby, no more then the little child knoweth wherefore he is borne into the world, or what he shall finde there. And therefore albeit nature presseth to come foorth neuerthe-

lesse according to that sense which it can haue,
 it weepeth by and by after it is borne, as if it
 were fallen into some great inconuenience, and
 that some great euil were fallen unto it: as we
 doe also at our death, for the cause before alleged,
 not considering that it is our second and better birth."
 Primaudaye, pp.403-4.

"Comme l'homme a esté préparé en la matrice pour
 estre mis en ce Monde, qu'aussi est il comme préparé
 en ce corps & en ce Monde pour viure en l'autre.
 Nous apprehendons quand naturellement il faut sortir
 de ce Monde. Et qui est l'enfant, si nature par
 son artifice ne l'en chassoit, qui voulust sortir
 de son cachot, qui n'en sorte comme pasmé & perdu;
 qui, s'il auoit la cognoissance lors & la parole,
 n'appellast mort ce que nous appellons naissance;
 sortir de sa vie, ce que nous disons y entrer?"
 De Mornay, p.309.

In the interpretation of such parallels, which could be extended to cover more than half of Davies' poem, we must proceed warily. Even such a large number of similarities do not prove conclusively that Davies had used Primaudaye and De Mornay in the composition of his own work. The discussion of the subject was so general in the Renaissance, and followed so faithfully the ancient arguments of an old tradition, that only the most minute study could ever determine the indebtedness of one writer to another. Moreover, there are important differences between The French Academie and Nosce Teipsum. Whereas Primaudaye, for instance, discusses both sides of the controversy about the origin of the soul, without himself deciding for either, Davies proves by "clear demonstrations" that souls are successively created by God. Davies' distinction between the sensitive and the intellectual memory is not in Primaudaye. Such differences are numerous enough to show that Davies if he ever read The French Academie at all, had studied it critically,

and in the light of other works on the subject. And they strengthen the suspicion that the parallels cited may have their explanation in some common source. Nevertheless these parallels leave no doubt as to the relation of Nosce Teipsum to the general idealistic tradition of his own time, and effectively dispose of the theory that it was an isolated re-working of the ideas of Aristotle, Nemesisius or Thomas Aquinas.

Since the poem was so thoroughly derivative, on what grounds was its contemporary reputation based? Certainly not on any originality in thought. On such a subject James I, at least, preferred orthodoxy. But Nosce Teipsum is distinguished above the forgotten treatise of Primaudaye, because of its vigor and consistency of thought, its thorough rationalism, and its remarkable combination of clearness and condensation. Only a keen intellect could at that time have sifted these kernels from the chaff of Primaudaye. The originality of Nosce Teipsum lay in its strength of conception, in the steady march of its argument, in its direct and triumphant manner of meeting the enemies of idealism, without asking any concessions, on their own ground of experience and reason.

IV

The Obsolete Rationalism of Davies

Davies, therefore, belonged to the school of rational idealism; he affirmed the spiritual nature of man. But within this school there had been two methods of procedure, the empirical and the dialectical. The latter, of which Aquinas may be regarded as

representative, began with metaphysical principles and tried to deduce from them a necessary and consistent theory of the soul. The empiricists, represented by Augustine, began with direct observation of their own inner life, and assumed a spiritualistic explanation of those phenomena which could not be accounted for by the materialistic hypothesis. Davies was an empiricist, partly no doubt because he was an Englishman; but also, and chiefly, because, in the Renaissance, the Thomistic philosophy, though studied everywhere and in some schools partly accepted, had long ceased to dominate intellectual Europe.

For in the Renaissance the spirit of scepticism had undermined all the preconceptions of Medievalism as it was formulated by Aquinas. Scepticism had made necessary a rational, non-Biblical defense of the Christian religion, and thus stimulated the formulation of rational theology, of which Aquinas himself was one of the founders, and which developed into Deism. But scepticism had gone even deeper, and denied the possibility of any rational knowledge; Nominalism, in its opposition to the theory of Universals, had, as we have seen,¹ anticipated even the sensationalism of Hobbes; early in the sixteenth century Agrippa of Netesheim had popularized a superficial scepticism; and the revival of Sextus Empiricus provided unbelief with a more systematic and thorough method of criticism. Scholastic method had by the time of Davies completely lost its hold on the Renaissance, and pious Christian Humanists were among the first in their scorn of it. Therefore, as the Bible had lost its authority in the sphere of rational theology, so in philosophy the

¹Chapter I. p. 36, n.1.

champions of idealism could no longer rest their argument on the metaphysics of Aquinas.

In beginning with an assumed doubt and in examining his own nature, Davies was therefore in the spirit of his age. His method, as old as Augustine and Plato, was also as modern as Descartes. For Descartes owed much to the same tradition as Davies. Bossuet, who himself wrote for his pupil the Dauphin a Traité de la Connaissance de Dieu et de soi-même, had said as much. "Descartes," he wrote in a letter to Bishop Huet,

"a dit d'autres choses, que je crois utiles contre les athées et les libertins, et, pour celles-là, comme je les ai trouvées dans Platon, et, ce que j'estime beaucoup plus, dans saint Augustin, dans saint Anselme, quelques-unes même dans saint Thomas et dans les autres auteurs orthodoxes, aussi bien ou mieux expliqués que dans Descartes, je ne crois pas qu'elles soient devenues mauvaises depuis que ce philosophe s'en est servi: au contraire, je les soutiens de tout mon coeur, et je ne crois pas qu'on les puisse combattre sans quelque péril."¹

But as a defender of the faith of idealism, Davies looked too much towards the past, the Middle Ages. He was too completely rational. He wrote passages of deep feeling, of humility and reverence, but in his study of himself he never found his soul. He made the error of seeking it only in his reason, and he wrote an anatomy of the mind. The immortality he wrote about, the highest bliss, is the repose of the understanding in perfect truth, in a knowledge of God. But such a conception is either profoundly mystical, as in Dante and Aquinas, or it is a mere abstraction. With Davies it remained an abstraction. He never discovered those springs

¹Quoted by Brunetière, La Philosophie de Bossuet, in Études Critiques, vol. 5, Paris (1896). pp.48-9.

in the human heart which are the true source of philosophical as well as of religious idealism. In his poem the modern reader finds no comfort or solace.

An illuminating contrast to Davies is afforded by his contemporary John Donne, who was so deeply affected by the Pyrrhonism of his time, and learned in his sceptical youth that all Divinity is Love and Wonder.¹ Both wrote of the assurance of the soul at the approach of death. Davies is contemplative:

"O ignorant poor man! what dost thou beare
 Lockt up within the casket of thy brest?
 What iewels, and what riches hast thou there!
 What heavenly treasure in so weake a chest! . . .

And when thou think'st of her eternitie,
 Thinke not that Death against her nature is,
 Thinke it a birth; and when thou goest to die,
 Sing like a swan, as if thou went'st to blisse.

And if thou, like a child, didst feare before,
 Being in the darke, where thou didst nothing see;
 Now I haue broght thee torch-light, feare no more;
 Now when thou diest, thou canst not hud-winkt be. . .

Cast downe thy selfe, and onely striue to raise
 The glory of thy Maker's sacred Name;
 Use all they powers, that Blessed Power to praise,
 Which giues thee power to bee, and use the same."²

There is an almost complete obliteration of the self as a personality in these lines, whereas Donne's poem, Hymne to God my God in my sicknesse, satisfies deep longings and releases hidden spiritual energies such as are necessary to any real and living conviction of immortality:

"Since I am comming to that Holy roome,
 Where, with thy Quire of Saints for evermore,
 I shall be made thy Musique; As I come
 I tune the Instrument here at the dore,
 And what I must doe then, thinke here before. . . .

¹Donne, Poetical Works, ed. cit. I, 30. Cf. pp. 81 and 246.

²Davies, ed. cit. I, 114-116.

So, in his purple wrapp'd receive mee Lord,
 By these his thornes give me his other Crowne;
 And as to others soules I preach'd thy word,
 Be this my Text, my Sermon to mine owne,
 Therefore that he may raise the Lord throws down."¹

Davies' conception of the world and of man lacks poetry. He could not express, because he could not see or appreciate, all the passions, intuitions, paradoxes, mysteries of human nature. The author of Nosce Teipsum never read the secrets of the heart of man.

The style is the man. Clarity, the chief merit of Davies' poem, may almost be said to be its chief defect. The most difficult and abstract concepts are illustrated and, as it were, made concrete by a series of parallel physical images. The soul

"... is a vine, which doth no propping need,
 To make her spread her selfe or spring upright;
 She is a starre, whose beames doe not proceed
 From any sunne, but from a native light."²

Such images are delightful in a metaphysical treatise, perhaps, but they are feeble in poetry; they are vague in outline and colorless. Under the influence of the abstract thought which the poem is primarily intended to express, they become half generalized, lest the interest of the reader should be diverted from the idea to the image. To use psychological terms, they are concepts rather than images. We do not see either the stream or the branch in this stanza:

"When in th'effects she doth the causes know,
 And seeing the stream, thinks wher the spring doth rise;
 And seeing the branch, conceiues the root below;
 These things she views without the bodie's eyes."³

¹Donne, ed. cit. I, 368-9.

²Davies, ed. cit. I, 30.

³Davies, ed. cit. I, 31.

The style of Davies is perfectly adapted to express his thought, but neither is imaginative or poetical.

On the whole, Davies' defense of idealism was too facile. He evaded the problems raised by the deeper scepticism of his own day, and he paid the penalty of growing obsolete in the next age. He and his school had made too many assumptions to escape a searching and destructive criticism. Against their doctrine of the spirituality of the rational processes, the seventeenth century boldly revived the peripatetic axiom: *Nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu*. The soul, which Davies "distinguished plainly" as a "substance and a spirit," was discarded as both unknowable and a contradiction in terms. Thus the realities of which Davies and his contemporaries were so certain, melted away under critical examination. Not only psychology and philosophy, but science, as we shall see in the next chapter, was modified in a similar manner and under the same influence. Medieval notions and preconceptions were examined and either re-defined or discarded. European thought was transformed by the critical effort of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was the triumph of scepticism.

Appendix to Chapter IV.

John Dove's fourteen arguments¹ for the immortality of the soul were published in 1605, six years after Nosce Teipsum, but their resemblance to the poem makes them worth quoting, especially as the volume is scarce. My abstract is made from the London edition of 1656, pages 167 to 176.

"I will produce these arguments which are alleaged by naturall Philosophers to prove the immortality of the soule. . ."

I. "The First is drawne from the understanding of man, for man's soule is of infinite capacity, the more it understandeth the more it is able to understand. . . But, for as much as it is infinitely capable in this life, and cannot be satisfied in this life, therefore it must be satisfied in the life to come."

2. "The object of mans understanding is truth. . . And for as much as this cannot be attained unto in this life, therefore it is reserved unto a better life."

3. "The object of mans understanding is ENS, everything that is, but because there are some things materiall, & some spirituall, it must conceive them both, and as for the things which be immateriall and without bodies, it cannot distinctly conceive them in this fraile body, therefore the conceiving of them belongeth to the soule when it is separated from the body."

4. "All men by nature desire Knowledge as the Philosopher speaketh, but scire est rem per causas cognoscere, to know a thing is to judge and discern of the causes of it. . . And that cannot be in this life, because the essence of God is not conceived by discoursing of him, but by perfectly seeing of him, & beholding of him face to face, even as he is."

II. "My second reason is drawne from the will of man. That also is infinite . . . Man may desire that which is infinitely good. . ."

2. The liberty also and freedome of mans will . . . is of an infinit power. . .

3. The object of the will is that whatsoever is good. . . and therefore never resteth. . . untill it come to perfect fruition of God . . .

¹See page 173.

4. The will of man moveth it selfe to one thing and an other, and is not moved by any naturall agent, and as the will is, so is the essence it selfe, and therefore not subject to corruption."

III. "A third reason, the very appetite of man is also infinite, it findeth no contentment among all the things which are under the Sunne. . ."

IV. "A fourth, the very operation of the soule it selfe without any reference unto the body."

V. "A fifth, nothing can be destroyed by that wherin the perfection of it doth consist, but the very perfection of the soule doth consist in the abstraction and separation of it from the body. . ."

VI. "The sixt, There is a kind of reflection of the minde and all the faculties thereof, above it selfe, the understanding understandeth that it doth understand, the will willeth that it shall be willing, the memory remembreth that it doth remember, so it understandeth that it doth remember, so it understandeth that it willeth and doth remember, which no bodily nor mortall thing can performe, it is therefore spirituall and immortall."

VII. "The soul can attain unto a more divine knowledge by revelations, but only when it is abstracted from the body.

VIII. "The soul, as it is not produced by any natural cause, so it cannot be destroyed by any natural cause.

IX. "The soul subsisteth by it selfe, and therefore it cannot dye by any accident: The antecedent I prove, because it hath operations proper to it selfe, as I have shewed."

X. Everything destroyed is destroyed by its contrary; the soul has no contrary.

XI. Understanding increases with the aging of the body.

XII. The soul is like God and the Angels, spiritual, immaterial and simple.

XIII. Proper distribution of justice requires an after life.

XIV. "There cannot be conscience without immortality of soul."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE NEW PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

I. The Medieval Cosmology.- II. The Development of the Mechanistic Theory.- III. The Position of Bacon.- IV. The Materialism of Hobbes.- V. The Opposition to Hobbes: Cartesianism and Scepticism.

The idealism and the spiritualistic psychology of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance were intimately bound up with a scientific conception of the world and the relation of man to it. Such a close connection between philosophy, psychology, physiology, and even physics and astronomy is of course sought in every age, inasmuch as men always generalize, legitimately or not, from whatever data they have. But in the Middle Ages this union was prescribed; none of the sciences had as yet attained their autonomy, and their ends and methods were both determined by the dominant theological interest. To organize all knowledge into a harmonious and complete system, was the Medieval ideal; and assuming this interrelationship and union of all branches of knowledge, men imbued with the Medieval spirit reasoned in science from the same assumptions and by the same methods as in philosophy. They regarded *apriori* principles as valid in astronomy as in theology. In fact, what they desired was not science at all, but theosophy.

This closed completeness of the universe as it appeared in the Middle Ages is extremely difficult for us to comprehend, especially when it led to modes of reasoning which we, with the advantage of centuries of remarkable progress, regard as ridicu-

lously erratic and fantastic. For instance, reasoning by analogy was a frequent and favorite method of clinching a scientific argument. A typical instance is recorded from the advanced and liberal university of Padua in the seventeenth century. The principal professor of philosophy, refusing to look through Galileo's telescope at the Satellites of Jupiter, argued that they could not possibly exist. For

"there are seven windows," he said to the Grand Duke, "given to animals in the domicile of the head, through which the air is admitted to the tabernacle of the body, to enlighten, to warm, and to nourish it. What are these parts of the microcosmos? Two nostrils, two eyes, two ears, and a mouth. So in the heavens, as in a macrocosmos, there are two favorable stars, two unpropitious, two luminaries, and Mercury undecided and indifferent. From this and many other similarities in nature, such as the seven metals, etc., which it were tedious to enumerate, we gather that the number of planets is necessarily seven. Moreover, these satellites of Jupiter are invisible to the naked eye, and therefore can exercise no influence on the earth, and therefore would be useless, and therefore do not exist. Besides, the Jews and other ancient nations, as well as modern Europeans, have adopted the division of the week into seven days, and have named them after the seven planets. Now, if we increase the number of the planets, this whole and beautiful system falls to the ground."¹

But in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the natural sciences developed a new method, which had phenomenal success; and this new method involved a new philosophy of science which at almost every point contradicted Medievalism. Science declared itself independent, and became a law unto itself. It proceeded on assumptions that traditional philosophy and theology had to regard

¹Quoted by Sedgwick and Tyler, Short History of Science, N.Y. (1917), pp. 222-3. Cf. another example on pp. 233-4.

as absolute heresy. Thus science destroyed the Medieval unity and order of knowledge; it subjected to a re-examination, from a new point of view, the whole idealistic and constructive effort of the Middle Ages. The world which had been thought of as a rational unity, was resolved into atoms; man, who had regarded himself as created a little lower than the angels, was now explained as a machine, a part of a mechanistic nature. John Donne, in The First Anniversary (1611), expressed the dejection produced by this new science. Describing the melancholy state of the world, he says that the

"new Philosophy calls all in doubt,
The Element of fire is quite put out;
The Sun is lost, and th'Earth, and no mans wit
Can well direct him where to looke for it.
And freely men confesse that this world's spent,
When in the Planets, and the Firmament
They seeke so many new; they see that this
Is crumbled out againe to his Atomies.
'Tis all in pieces, all cohaerence gone;
All just supply, and all Relation."¹

In the scientific effort of the Renaissance, therefore, we have one of the most important conflicts between the old thought and the new. Although the full implications of it were not at once understood, the new philosophy was a denial of all the idealism the Middle Ages had comprehended; it appeared to the older school as a restoration of the atheistic materialism of Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius. This new philosophy of science, as it profoundly challenged the old conception of man as well as of the world, merits a chapter in a study of the disintegration of Medievalism.²

¹Donne, ed. cit. I, 237. ll. 205-214.

²I am deeply indebted in this chapter to T. C. Allbutt, Science and Medieval Thought, London(1901) and to Höffding, History of Modern

I

The Medieval Cosmology

As the scientific theory of the Middle Ages was a branch of its philosophy, it was, like philosophy, dominated by Neo-Platonic idealism and Aristotelian logic. From Neo-Platonism came the deeply-rooted belief that the supra-sensual world of Ideas is the real world. True knowledge is abstract knowledge, and the highest felicity of man is to know the most universal of all universals, that is God, or Ens. No scientific method is useful which does not lead the mind upward on a gradual scale of generalizations, from individual to species, from species to genus. The scientific effort of the Middle Ages was therefore primarily one of classification, systematization, and abstraction of concepts. The highest aim of knowledge was to understand Jehovah's reply to Moses: "I am that I am."

This idealistic impulse found its method and materials in Aristotle. From him was derived the maxim: "Vere scire est per causas scire." But the word cause has suffered a change in meaning in modern times, so profound that most of its Aristotelian signifi-

Philosophy, London(1900). The Short History by Sedgwick and Tyler is not philosophical, but is full of useful illustrative material. Whewell's books referred to below are a mine of information. The influence of the new science on English thought in the seventeenth century still awaits thorough treatment; C. S. Duncan, The New Science and English Literature in the Classical Period (Chicago Diss. 1913), practically ignores the serious aspect of the new science, concerning himself rather with those comic excesses and peculiarities of the gentlemen virtuosi which made them material for comedy and satire. My own discussion is, I am aware, sketchy; the subject merits a volume.

cance has disappeared. Aristotle distinguished four kinds of causes. The first two, "formal" cause and "material" cause, were part of his metaphysics, which explained every entity in the world as a union of passive matter with an active form. Form and matter, Aristotle held, must always exist together in every individual object. In the Middle Ages Thomas Aquinas regarded both form and matter as universals, and found himself confronted with the insoluble problem of individuation; that is, given two universals, how can they be combined into an individual? We have also seen how this greatest Doctor of the Middle Ages identified "forms" with the spiritual element of man, and maintained that the "forms" of men and angels are capable of a separate existence, free from any matter whatsoever.¹ No clearer example could be adduced of the Neo-Platonic transformation of Aristotle in Medieval thought. The Aristotelian "form" persists as a pure Neo-Platonic Idea even with the somewhat sceptical Nicolas of Cusa, who says in his work On Conjectures:

"Conjectures must proceed from our mind, as the real world proceeds from the infinite Divine Reason. For since the human mind, the lofty likeness of God, participates, as it may, in the fruitfulness of the creative nature, it doth from itself, as the image of the Omnipotent Form, bring forth reasonable thoughts which have a similitude to real existences. Thus the Human Mind exists as a conjectural form, of the world, as the Divine Mind is its real form."²

Knowledge of the formal and material causes of anything was, therefore, a knowledge of the universals under which it might be sub-

¹See above, Chap. IV, p. 167.

²Quoted by Whewell, William, The Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences, London (1847). II, 181.

sumed -- in other words, a knowledge of its classification.

Aristotle's third, the efficient or producing cause, corresponds somewhat to the modern conception, but without the modern mechanical and mathematical implications. The efficient and the formal causes of an object might even be the same; as, when a sculptor designs a statue, he is the efficient cause of the statue, but only because in his mind he has an idea of the statue. And both the formal and efficient causes might be identical with the fourth, or final cause, the aim of the sculptor, or the purposiveness in the statue.¹

It is not difficult to understand that this kind of knowledge of causes was combined with Neo-Platonic idealism. The result of the union was an attempt to know things by getting at their inwardness, or essence, or whatever element in them would submit to the highest degree of generalization. It is because our whole method of understanding the world is different from that of the Medieval thinkers, that we regard their efforts as merely arid classification.

When this method was applied to the materials of science, one could not expect science in the modern sense. In the study and classification of forms in order to get at the essence of things, the mystical and spiritual purpose triumphed over exact observation; and therefore, says Whewell,

"instead of referring the events of the external world to space and time, to sensible connection and causation, men attempted to reduce such occurrences under spiritual and supersensual relations and dependencies; they referred them to superior intelli-

¹Erdmann, Hist. of Phil., ed. cit. I, 146-ff.

gencies, to theological conditions, to past and future events in the moral world, to states of mind and feelings, to the creatures of an imaginary mythology or demonology. And thus their physical Science became Magic, their Astronomy became Astrology, the study of the Composition of bodies became Alchemy, Mathematics became the contemplation of the Spiritual Relations of number and figure, and Philosophy became Theosophy."¹

In many respects the Medieval cosmology was indebted to Aristotle. In his Metaphysics (Book XII, Chap. viii) he had said that the stars and planets must be eternal essences, for they move in perfect circles, and a body which moves in a perfect circle must be eternal and unresting. From the planetary spheres he derived the animal heat and motion in the living beings found on earth. He saves himself from hylozoism by assuming prior to these spheres a mover which is itself unmoveable and eternal. Apart from the fact that Aristotle in this way made himself one of the authorities of the Medieval superstitious astrology, his theory is illuminating to us by showing the futility of the science of "forms" as applied to motion. To take another example, Aristotle explained the phenomena of gravitation by saying that the various substances or elements have their allotted places, to which it is their nature to return when removed. Such explanations are difficult to distinguish from animism, and in the Middle Ages the parallel of the macrocosm and the microcosm often suggested an animated universe. Pomponatius called the world an animal. Aristotle's fifth element, the quintessence, became in the early Renaissance a spiritus mundi.²

¹Whewell, History of the Inductive Sciences, 3rd ed., N.Y. (1884). I, 211.
²Lasswitz, Kurd, Geschichte der Atomistik, Hamburg (1890). I, 293.

The insoluble problems of the soul and motion were therefore closely related throughout Medieval thought, and uniformly given spiritualistic or animistic solutions. In the general indistinctness of thought, and the aspiration after universals and essences and forms, the difference between mind and matter was seriously obscured. The pitfall was unavoidable in the state of thought at that time; even the scientists who contributed most to the new philosophy of science, frequently used the language of the old. Gilbert described the magnetic force he had discovered as "of the nature of soul, surpassing the soul of man." Harvey refused to accept the theory of the "natural, vital and animal spirits"; but he believed that the motion of the heart and blood is due to "innate heat," which is not fire nor derived from fire; and the blood, he said, is not occupied by a spirit, but is a spirit, "celestial in nature, the soul, that which answers to the essence of the stars.... is something analogous to heaven, the instrument of heaven."¹ Even Kepler retained for a long time such animistic conceptions of force and motion. In his Epitome of the Copernican Astronomy (1618-21) he expresses himself thus:

"There is therefore a conflict between the carrying power of the sun and the impotence or material sluggishness (inertia) of the planet; each enjoys some measure of victory, for the former moves the planet from its position and the latter frees the planet's body to some extent from the bonds in which it is held. . . but only to be captured again by another portion of this rotary virtue." Elsewhere he says: "We must suppose one of two things: either that the moving spirits, in proportion as they are removed from the sun, are more feeble; or that there is one moving spirit in the centre of all the orbits, namely, in the sun, which urges each body the more vehemently in proportion as it is nearer; but in

¹Albutt, op. cit. pp. 41-ff.

more distant spaces languishes in consequence of the remoteness and attenuation of its virtue."¹

This vitalistic and animistic conception of force and motion was one of the most important of Medieval ideas, and one of the most fertile sources of Medieval superstition. But to ridicule it would be unintelligent; we have not yet found out the secret of what force and motion are; we have only learned a new method of describing their effects. In the Middle Ages, men sought for the essence of motion, and conceived of it in terms of the analogous will and effort of their own experience; this will and effort we have rejected, not because we know better the "essence" of force and motion, but because we have found it possible to hypothesize an unanimated physical world. This transformation of the philosophy of motion is due to the application of mathematics to science.

II

The Development of the Mechanistic Theory

The new philosophy of science was gradually developed in connection with the discoveries of the remarkable group of astronomers from Copernicus to Newton. But in its essential principles it was already understood by that universal genius, Leonardo da Vinci, half a century before the theory of Copernicus was first given to the world. Although his work remained in manuscript until the nineteenth century and was therefore without influence in the Renaissance

¹Quoted by Brewster and Tyler, op. cit. p. 214.



yet his ideas were so clear and definite and anticipated so strikingly two hundred years of scientific progress, that a brief account of them will clarify our sketch of the later discoveries.

Leonardo frequently declares himself in opposition to the scholastic methods, which employed authority and a priori reasoning; science, he said, can only be derived from experience.¹ He does not disdain reasoning: "Non è da biasimare lo mostrare, in fra l'ordine del processo della scienza, alcuna regola generale, nata dell'antidetta conclusione." But he understood the futility of seeking to know the essences of things: "Che cosa sia elemento. Nè la definizione di nessuna quiddità delli elementi non è in podestà dell'omo, ma gran parte de' loro effetti son noti."² Final causes, also, are unknowable: "O speculatore delle cose, non ti laudare di conoscere le cose, che ordinariamente, per sè medesima la natura, per sua ordini, naturalmente conduce; ma rallegrati di conoscere il fine di quelle cose, che son disegnate dalla mente tua!"³ Science meant to him primarily the application of mathematics: "Nessuna certezza è dove non si può applicare una delle scienze matematiche, over che non sono unite con esse matematiche."⁴ Mechanics he therefore called the paradise of the sciences: "La Meccanica è il paradiso delle scienze matematiche, perchè con quella si viene al frutto matematico."⁵ The object of such a science must be a universe of law, and Leonardo struggled to express this conception:

¹Leonardo da Vinci, Frammenti, ed. Solmi, Florence (1913). pp. 81, 83, 87, etc.

²Ibid. p.97

³Ibid. p.99

⁴Ibid. p.86

⁵Ibid. p.86

"La necessità è maestra e tutrice della natura. . . La natura è costretta dalla ragione della sua legge, che in lei infusamente vive."¹ His definition of force is very modern, though with one or two Medieval expressions: "Forza dico essere una virtù spirituale, una potenza invisibile, la quale, per accidentale esterna violenza, è causata dal moto e collocata e infusa ne' corpi, i quali sono dal loro naturale uso ritratti, dando a quelli vita attiva di maravigliosa potenza."² His freedom from animistic ideas appears more clearly in his statements of the principle of inertia: "Nessuna cosa insensata per sè si move, ma il suo moto è fatto da altri"; and "ogni moto naturale e continuo desidera conservare suo corso per la linea del suo principio, cioè, in qualunque loco esso si varia, domando principio."³

Unfortunately, the ideas of Leonardo remained sealed in his note-books, and were only slowly discovered a second time by later men. It was not by chance that they reappeared in connection with astronomy. The Copernican system raised new and more intricate problems of calculation, and by a more precise application of mathematics to the phenomena of motion, led to the development of astronomical physics.

Only those expert in mathematics and astronomy (as the present writer is not) can fully appreciate the amount of exact observation, calculation, and experiment which went to the formulation and justification of the Copernican astronomy, and the new science of motion involved in it. For a quarter of a century

¹Ibid. pp.112, 113.

²Ibid. p. 125

³Ibid. pp.125, 126.

Tycho Brahe gathered exact observations at his remarkable observatory, Uraniborg; and although Tycho opposed the Copernican system, it was with his data that Kepler labored to perfect that system and by their study he was compelled to abandon the animistic conception of nature. Kepler said of Tycho that he "possessed riches which he, like so many rich men, did not put to a right use."

Kepler was set free from Medieval notions through his patient mathematical calculations. He began his astronomical study with a predilection for "forms," for the explanation of the universe in terms of geometrical figures. The difficulties he encountered incited him to calculations, and so led to his own brilliant discoveries. His first work, the Mysterium cosmographicum (1597), proceeds, says Höffding,

"from theological and Pythagorean presuppositions. He conceives the universe as an image of the Trinity: the centre corresponds to the Father, the surrounding sphere to the Son, and the relation of the two to one another, expressed by the geometrical relations between the different spheres in which the planets move, to the Spirit; for the divine Spirit reveals Himself in the harmonious relation of magnitudes throughout the universe. Kepler attempted to show that the five regular bodies postulated by Pythagoras, i.e. bodies all of whose surfaces, sides, and angles are equal, may be situated in the different spheres in which the planets move. Thus the fundamental forms of geometry and the distribution of the heavenly bodies in space exactly correspond with one another. This is the cosmographical mystery over which Kepler waxed so enthusiastic, and which he retained as the leading idea which partly furthered, partly checked, his subsequent investigations. This idea was an expression of the conviction which he never abandoned that it must be possible to point to definite mathematical relations in the universe, and which incited him to ever new inquiries. It caused him endless trouble, however, on account of the presupposition accepted by him as well as the whole of

antiquity and the Middle Ages, viz. that the heavenly bodies must move in circles because the circle is the most perfect figure."¹

These a priori geometrical conceptions he had to abandon when he discovered by calculations that planets move in ellipses, not in perfect circles. In a similar manner he was led to reject the idea expressed in the Mysterium cosmographicum, that planets have souls. In the second edition of that early work he adds as a note to the expression "moving souls" (animae motrices) the observation: "In my treatise on Mars² I showed that there are no such things," and suggests "force" as a substitute for the word "soul." The reason for the change was an observation in celestial mechanics: "Formerly I believed that the force which moves the planets was really a soul. But when I reflected that this moving force decreases at a greater distance, I concluded it must be corporeal."³ These changes in Kepler's thought typify the whole transformation of thought by the new science; instead of souls and essences and forms, the new science investigated the laws of motion, especially by subjecting it to measurement; speculation gave way to experiment and mathematical calculation; instead of assuming that the world is a living being, the new science seemed to demonstrate that it is a lifeless machine.

Contemporaneous with Kepler, Galileo was contributing to the new science both by his discovery of the telescope, which brought so much new data to the confirmation of the new astronomical theories, and by his researches into the laws of motion. He dis-

¹Höfding, op.cit. I, 168-9.
²Published in 1609.
³Höfding, op.cit. I, 171-2.

proved the accepted Aristotelian theory that heavy bodies fall faster than light ones, and discovered the laws of accelerating force. Experiments led him towards a true conception of the principle of inertia. By patient observation and extreme caution in drawing conclusions, Galileo prepared the way for the exact statement of the principles of motion and force by his successors.¹

The seventeenth century likewise made remarkable advances in mathematics, without which the new science would have been impossible. In 1614 Napier published his logarithms. The problem of dealing mathematically with curves was solved by Descartes, who discovered analytical geometry. The simultaneous discovery of the calculus by Leibnitz and Newton, indicative of the great activity everywhere over similar problems and of the general progress being made, came at the end of a century of great discoveries in mathematics, physics and astronomy. It was Newton who finally, profiting by the results of all these allied researches, completed the mathematical description of force as exhibited in motion and gravity. From his thought the last vestige of animism and effort had been eliminated, and the conception of the world as a machine was perfected.²

This progress in mathematics and physics in the seventeenth century had a profound effect, especially in the impetus it gave to materialism. Even Descartes regarded living organisms as machines, although he of course admitted that man has also a "rational soul," and thus established the famous and influential

¹Whewell, Hist. of Ind. Sciences. I, 311-384.

²See Whewell's comparison of Kepler's and Newton's ideas of force, in his Hist. of the Ind. Sciences. I, 320.

Cartesian dualism. But there were many who accepted the mechanical theory without adding to it this idealistic superstructure which contradicted it. There was a general feeling that this spectacular new science was affiliated with old atheistic philosophies. And the increasing popularity of the atomistic philosophy of Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius, affected not only the general tone of society by stimulating "libertine" thought, but had its influence as well on the new science. The French philosopher Gassendi combined ancient atomism with the new science of his own day, and thereby prepared for Newton's rejection of the vortex theory of Descartes and the foundation of the modern atomistic science. Voltaire, in his Elements of the Philosophy of Newton, pointed out, no doubt with great satisfaction, this obligation of Newton to the despised atheists:

"Newton suivait les anciennes opinions de Démocrite, d'Épicure et d'une foule de philosophes rectifiées par notre célèbre Gassendi. Newton a dit plusieurs fois à quelques françois qui vivent encore, qu'il regardait Gassendi comme un esprit très juste et très sage, et qu'il ferait gloire d'être entièrement de son avis dans toutes les choses dont on vient de parler."¹

The new science, therefore, revived all the old problems of philosophy in a more acute and difficult form, and put the idealistic and spiritualistic tradition on the defensive. It precipitated a crisis in the history of thought. A reinvestigation became necessary of the nature of the soul, its connection with the body, the freedom of the will, as well as of such wider questions as the nature of God and his relation to the universe. Many and diverse

¹Quoted by Lange, History of Materialism, Boston (1881). I, 267, n. 12.

have been the solutions to these problems, from the seventeenth century to this day. The purpose of this chapter, however, is merely to make clear that this new philosophy of science was developed in the seventeenth century, and to investigate to what extent English thought at that time was conscious of the new problem and influenced by it.

III

The Position of Bacon

In England as elsewhere the theological opposition to the Copernican system was successful until far into the seventeenth century, and the Ptolemaic astronomy ruled the popular imagination. But a few liberal and curious students followed the new discoveries with genuine scientific interest and thoroughness. Among these was John Donne, who in the passage from The First Anniversary quoted above, shows that he appreciated something of the revolutionary significance of the new astronomy. Donne apparently did not get his information at second hand. In 1611, the year in which he wrote this poem, he also published his Conclave Ignatii, which indicates an enthusiastic study of Copernicus and Tycho Brahe and a knowledge of the publications of Galileo and Kepler as recent as that year and the preceding, -- with such eagerness did he follow the latest researches.¹ It needs to be frequently repeated that Donne was one of the most modern minds of his age.

¹Gosse, Life and Letters of John Donne. I, 257.

Fulke Greville, Sidney's friend, who took a despondent view of most things in the world, knew something of the new science and was apparently a reader of Bacon's Advancement of Learning. But he had little of Bacon's confidence in scientific effort, except for some practical purposes, and he was sceptical towards the new science:

"Nay we doe bring the influence of starres,
Yea God Himselfe euen, under moulds of Arts;
Yet all our Arts cannot preuaile so farre,
As to confirme our eyes, resolute our hearts,
Whether the heauens doe stand still or moue,
Were fram'd by Chance, Antipathie, or Loue.
Then what is our high-prais'd Philosophie,
But bookes of poesie, in prose compil'd?"¹

Especially remarkable is the attitude of Bacon towards the new science. Bacon was the most illustrious and most successful of the many theorizers of the Renaissance who sought a new method of knowledge. He declared that he was the trumpeter, announcing the victorious entry of a new age.² In this role he was accepted, and his prestige in the seventeenth century as the founder of inductive science was European.³ His influence on modern thought has been immeasurable; he has come to typify the modern spirit of progress based on a scientific study of nature. His unfinished romance, The New Atlantis, was continued in real life by the Royal Society. And yet, when we ask, not what his influence was, what part of his work inspired a later age, but what was his philosophy

¹Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, A Treatise of Human Learning. Works, ed. Grosart. II, 17.

²Adv. of Learning, IV, 1. Works, ed. Spedding, Boston (1882). IX, 13-14. Cf. Novum Organum, I, xxxv. Works, VIII, 75.

³See De Rémusat, Bacon, Sa Vie, Son Temps, Sa Philosophie, Paris (1857). pp. 400-420.

as a whole as Bacon himself expounded it, he appears strangely medieval. He stood on the threshold of modern times, but hesitated to enter. He looked forward, but he was in many ways a member of the past tradition. And to understand Bacon himself, as well as his time, we must study these antiquated aspects of his philosophy.

Like Descartes and the other "moderns" of the seventeenth century, Bacon regarded the past somewhat contemptuously, and desired to break violently with it. Plato and Aristotle as well as the schoolmen had followed wrong methods; Bacon valued Democritus more. What he criticized most was the metaphysical tendency which in the Middle Ages became Realism:

"The human understanding," he said, "is of its own nature prone to abstractions and gives a substance and reality to things which are fleeting. But to resolve nature into abstractions is less to our purpose than to dissect her into parts; as did the school of Democritus, which went further into nature than the rest. Matter rather than forms should be the object of our attention, its configurations and changes of configuration, and simple action, and law of action or motion; for forms are figments of the human mind, unless you will call those laws of action forms."¹

Strangely enough, in the second book of the Novum Organum Bacon used throughout the term Form to express the object of true scientific knowledge. He adopts it only after a criticism of the Aristotelian four causes, and wants to give the old term a new significance:

"In what an ill condition human knowledge is at the present time, is apparent even from the commonly received maxims. It is a correct position that 'true knowledge is knowledge by causes.' And causes again are not improperly distributed into four kinds; the

¹Novum Organum. I, 51. Ed. cit. VIII, 83.

material, the formal, the efficient, and the final. But of these the final cause rather corrupts than advances the sciences, except such as have to do with human action. The discovery of the formal is despaired of. The efficient and the material (as they are investigated and received, that is, as remote causes, without reference to the latent process leading to the form) are but slight and superficial, and contribute little, if anything, to true and active science. Nor have I forgotten that in a former passage I noted and corrected as an error of the human mind the opinion that Forms give existence. For though in nature nothing really exists beside individual bodies, performing pure individual acts according to a fixed law, yet in philosophy this very law, and the investigation, discovery, and explanation of it, is the foundation as well of knowledge as of operation. And it is this law, with its clauses, that I mean when I speak of Forms; a name which I the rather adopt because it has grown into use and become familiar."¹

But over these Forms Bacon stumbled. For, though he in some places spoke of Forms as the laws of action, in other places he slipped into language difficult to distinguish from the scholasticism he despised. For instance, he says that "the Form of a thing is the very thing itself, and the thing differs from the form no otherwise than as the apparent differs from the real, or the external from the internal, or the thing in reference to man from the thing in reference to the universe."² By certain "Shining Instances," or as we should say, crucial experiments, he hopes to "exhibit the nature in question naked and standing by itself, and also in its exaltation or highest degree of power."³ Therefore, although he warns against conceiving the Forms in the accustomed sense, and declares that "the Form of Heat or the Form of Light is

¹Novum Organum, II, 2. Ed.cit. VIII, 168.

²Novum Organum, II, 13. Ed.cit. VIII, 193.

³Nov. Org. II, 24. Ed.cit. VIII, 223.

the same thing as the Law of Heat or the Law of Light,"¹ still the "Law of Heat" which he gives as an illustration of his method is not a law, but a definition. His "First Vintage" leads him to the conclusion that,

"from a survey of the instances, all and each, the nature of which Heat is a particular case appears to be Motion. . . When I say of Motion that it is as the genus of which heat is a species, I would be understood to mean, not that heat generates motion or that motion generates heat (though both are true in certain cases), but that Heat itself, its essence and quiddity, is Motion and nothing else."²

Bacon wished, as he said, to dissect nature into parts; by a sort of analysis, he wanted to isolate the elements, or as he called them, Simple Forms, and arrange them in some significant classification. This is intelligible. But he was searching also for the laws of nature, the secrets of her transformations; here he was baffled, and mysteriously identified laws and forms. In the confusion the essential idea of law, namely the dependence of one phenomenon on another, tended to get obscured, and the idea of form as the essence or quiddity of a thing came into the foreground as the aim of scientific research.

In working out his theories Bacon was of course hampered by the imperfect development of science in his day, as well as by his own ignorance. His aim was to resolve the physical world into qualitative differences; but qualitative differences are not sufficient to explain processes. Modern science has also accepted

¹Nov. Org. II, 17. Ed. cit. VIII, 205-6.

²Nov. Org. II, 20. Ed. cit. VIII, 211.

Bacon's striking hypothesis that heat is a form of motion. But the laws of heat are arrived at by measurement, not by deductions from a definition. As Höffding has said, because Bacon was unable to resolve qualitative differences into quantitative, he could not reconcile his two conceptions of Forms as elements and as laws.¹

Preoccupied in this blind-alley, Bacon ignored the scientific work of his famous contemporaries, Galileo and Kepler. Mathematics he had little taste for. He therefore occupies a position paradoxical for the "founder of modern science," of not understanding those fruitful discoveries in his own time on which the modern philosophy of science is based. He never conceived of a mechanical universe in which the laws of motion could be expressed in mathematical terms. It is because the principles of mechanics are absent from his conception of law, that it is clouded with difficulties for modern readers. No one familiar with the laws of motion could use the bewildering term "Form" to signify a law of nature.

Bacon was therefore never troubled by the problem of materialism as stated by the new science. In some places he seems indeed to lean towards materialism. He objected, notably to final causes, that great mainstay of rational theology, because they belong, he said, to Metaphysics, not to Physics. Their introduction into physics has been "a great misfortune to philosophy."

"For the handling of final causes in physics has driven away and overthrown the diligent inquiry of physical causes, and made men to stay upon these specious and shadowy causes, without actively pressing

¹Höffding, op. cit. I, 202.

the inquiry of those which are really and truly physical; to the great arrest and prejudice of science. For this I find done, not only by Plato, who ever anchors upon that shore, but also by Aristotle, Galen, and others, who also very frequently strike upon these shallows. . . . And therefore the natural philosophy of Democritus and others who removed God and Mind from the structure of things, and attributed the form thereof to infinite essays and proofs of nature (which they termed by one name, Fate or Fortune), and assigned the causes of particular things to the necessity of matter, without any intermixture of final causes, seems to me . . . to have been, as regards physical causes, much more solid and to have penetrated further into nature than that of Aristotle and Plato; for this single reason, that the former never wasted time on final causes, while the latter were ever inculcating them."¹

But he goes on to say on the next page that the study of physical causes, so far from being atheistical, leads inevitably to God at the last. His criticism of final causes is therefore not to be taken as a sign of materialistic leanings. Enlightened men before Bacon had ridiculed the superstition of reading the will of God in all the movements of nature, after the manner, as Gabriel Harvey wrote Spenser, "of women Philosophers, and Divines."² Already in the Renaissance men could doubt the profitableness of seeking final causes, without necessarily drawing upon themselves the suspicion of atheism or materialism.

In his belief in the continuity and system of knowledge Bacon manifests a distinct affinity with medieval idealism rather than with the new science. Bacon believed in a gradation of ideas

¹De Augmentis, Book III, Ed.cit. VIII, 508-510.

²Harvey's letters to Spenser in 1580 are a witty attack on the superstitious interpretations of the recent earthquake.

which reminds one of that medieval scale of universals called the Tree of Porphyry.¹

"For," he says, "Knowledges are as pyramids, whereof history and experience are the basis. And so of Natural Philosophy the basis is Natural History; the stage next the basis is Physic; the stage next the vertical point is Metaphysic. As for the cone and vertical point ('the work which God worketh from the beginning to the end,'² namely, the summary law of nature) it may fairly be doubted whether man's inquiry can attain to it."³

In another passage, under the figure of the horns of Pan, he applies the pyramidal idea to nature itself, reaching upwards continuously to the divine:

"For all nature rises to a point like a pyramid. Individuals, which lie at the base of nature, are infinite in number; these are collected into Species, which are themselves manifold; the Species rise again into Genera; which also by continual gradations are contracted into more universal generalities, so that at last nature seems to end as it were in unity; as is signified by the pyramidal form of the horns of Pan. Nor need we wonder if the horns of Pan reach even to the heaven, seeing that the transcendentals of nature, or universal ideas do in a manner reach up to divinity. And hence the famous chain of Homer (that is, the chain of natural causes) was said to be fastened to the foot of Jupiter's throne; and we see that no one has handled metaphysics and the eternal and immovable in nature, and withdrawn his mind for awhile from the variable succession of things, without falling at once on Natural Theology; so easy and near a passage is it from the top of the pyramid to matters divine."⁴

¹ See above, Chap. I, p. 4.

² Eccles. iii, 11.

³ De Augmentis, Book III. Ed. cit. VIII, 507.

⁴ De Augmentis, Book II. Ed. cit. VIII, 449.

How knowledge of matter can lead to spiritual knowledge Bacon does not make clear; his faith in this continuity was in fact a confusion of inductive science with the old scholastic philosophy. It was the same Medieval faith which Milton made Gabriel expound to Adam, who replied:

"O favourable spirit, propitious guest,
Well hast thou taught the way that might direct
Our knowledge, and the scale of Nature set
From centre to circumference, whereon
In contemplation of created things
By steps we may ascend to God."¹

This faith the new mechanical science destroyed, when it forced upon the seventeenth century a troublesome dualism of mind and matter, of spirit and motion. Bacon contributed nothing to this great metaphysical discussion of the next age; in his first principles he belonged too much to the past.

In so far as he touched on the traditional metaphysical questions, such as the nature of the soul and of God, he was inclined, as in the passages quoted, to doubt the power of the human reason to understand them. This doubt did not imply any break in the continuity of nature; it was the humility of human reason recognizing its limitations. Though Bacon therefore had a firm belief in the power of man to know the material world and master it, he left open the problems of the spiritual world and frankly admitted that their solution must be sought in faith and revelation. He accepted the distinction currently made in his time between the "sensible soul" and the "rational soul," or spirit. The

¹Paradise Lost, Book V, ll. 507-512.

former, the "soul of brutes, must clearly be regarded as a corporeal substance," and he thought that a more diligent inquiry might profitably be made into it.¹ But as regards the rational soul we can only know certainly its faculties or functions; its substance and nature must remain a mystery to philosophy.

".... the considerations of the original of the soul, whether it be native or adventive, and how far it is exempted from laws of matter, and of the immortality thereof, and many other points have not been more laboriously enquired than variously reported; so as the travail therein taken seemeth to have been rather in a maze than in a way. But although I am of opinion that this knowledge may be more really and soundly enquired, even in nature, than it hath been; yet I hold that in the end it must be bounded by religion, or else it will be subject to deceit and delusion; for as the substance of the soul in the creation was not extracted out of the mass of heaven and earth by the benediction of a producat, but was immediately inspired from God; so it is not possible that it should be (otherwise than by accident) subject to the laws of heaven and earth, which are the subject of philosophy; and therefore the true knowledge of the nature and state of the soul, must come by the same inspiration that gave the substance."²

Bacon was likewise careful not to let his science encroach upon the territory of Divinity. For, although "the use of reason in spiritual things, and the latitude thereof, is very great and general: for it is not for nothing that the apostle calleth religion our reasonable service of God," yet he does not believe that religion can be founded on "the light of nature." "For it is written, Coeli enarrant gloriam Dei, but it is not written, Coeli

¹De Augmentis, Book IV. Ed. cit. IX, 48-51.

²Advancement of Learning, Book II. Ed. cit. VI, 254.

enarrant voluntatem Dei."¹ On the "true limits and use of reason in spiritual things" Bacon felt there was a need of much more study and discussion. But he was not among those who cultivated "natural theology"; the study of the physical universe points to the existence of God, but he can be known only by revelation.

In the eighteenth century, the Encyclopedists, who uniformly praised Bacon as the founder of science, as the greatest, most universal and most eloquent of philosophers, referred to Bacon's concessions to religion as a weakness of his character, sometimes even as an intentional insincerity, a disguise adopted to escape persecution.² But the eighteenth century always saw insincerity in ideas which it could not understand. No doubt there was much dissimulation of religion in the Renaissance, when persecution was rife. The doctrine of the "double truth" undoubtedly served Pomponatius merely as a disguise. But Bacon never suggests that what may be true for philosophy can be false in religion; he seems on the contrary always to imply that all truth is of one texture, but that, as human reason cannot grasp the truths of Divinity, philosophy adumbrates into mystery. Bacon had too genuine a sense of the necessity of religion to have been a materialist. And granting the necessity of religion, in Bacon's time one had to accept as the basis and support of it, either revelation or rational theology. Bacon had to speak in the language of his day. There is no good reason for thinking that it was insincere merely because it was antiquated. Bacon, the "founder of modern science," belongs

¹Adv. of Learning, Book II. Ed.cit. VI, 394-5.

²De Remusat, Bacon. pp. 424-ff.

philosophically to the age before Kepler and Galileo, to the sixteenth rather than the seventeenth century. And therefore not only was he not a materialist himself, but he did not think through the problem of materialism in its modern terms. This problem was attacked only after his time, by Hobbes, who accepted the materialistic solution, and by the Cambridge Platonists, who rejected it.

IV

The Materialism of Hobbes

The mental history of Hobbes is typical of the mathematical and physical preoccupations of the seventeenth century. His philosophical awakening came, according to the gossipy Aubrey, at the age of forty, when he accidentally opened a book of Euclid and became enchanted by the certainty of mathematical demonstration. Along with Euclid he studied Galileo, from whom, there is ample evidence, both internal and external, he derived his fundamental mechanical theory which he applied both to the world and to man.¹ His first work, A Short Tract on First Principles (ca.1630), shows him in the process of adjusting himself to the new philosophy.

"It shows the author," says Sorley, "so much impressed by his reading of Euclid as to adopt the geometrical form (soon afterwards used by Descartes) for the expression of his argument. It shows further that he had already fixed on the conception of motion as fundamental for the explanation of things, but also that he had not yet relinquished the scholastic doctrine of species in explaining action and perception."²

¹Sorley, W.R., History of English Philosophy, Cambridge (1920). p.49.
²Sorley, op. cit. p. 50.

Motion became with Hobbes the first principle of philosophy, and he applied the idea not only to the physical world, but to man and society. Of Aristotle's four causes, he recognized only the material and efficient as real; the term "formal cause" he regarded as a mere juggling of words, and the final cause, he said, is always reducible to efficient cause.¹ All cases are therefore ultimately reducible to motion. A complete science should begin with a study of simple motions, then proceed to more complex motions in geometry, thence to physics, until we reach the most complex motions in "moral philosophy, in which we are to consider the motions of the mind . . . what causes they have, and of what they be causes."² The soul is thus assumed to be a part of the mechanical world, a sort of thin, filmy substance.

"By the name of spirit," he says, "we understand a body natural, but of such subtilty, that it worketh not upon the senses; but that filleth up the place which the image of a visible body might fill up. Our conception therefore of spirit consisteth of figure without colour; and in figure is understood dimension, and consequently, to conceive a spirit, is to conceive something that hath dimension. But spirits supernatural commonly signify some substance without dimension; which two words do flatly contradict one another."³

Hobbes declared himself willing to accept on faith the existence of such incomprehensible beings as God and the Angels, though he suggested maliciously that "the Scripture favoureth them more, that hold angels and spirits corporeal, than them that hold

¹Hobbes, Elements of Philosophy, Part II, Chap. 10, sec. 7. English Works, ed. Molesworth, I, 131-2.

²Elements of Philosophy, Part I, Chap. 6, especially sections 5 and 6. Ed.cit. I, 65-ff.

³Hobbes, Human Nature, Chap. XI, sec. 4. Ed.cit., IV, 60-61.

the contrary."¹ The ironical intention of the argument is undeniable. Under his outward acceptance of Christianity in such form as the king or the regular establishment might please to prescribe, Hobbes concealed a nature in which the religious instincts remained undeveloped. He had neither the religious nor the philosophic nor the scientific imagination of Bacon. His nature was put to a crucial test in his mid-career when he was asked for comments on Descartes' Discours. His own mechanical and materialistic philosophy was already definitely formulated, and he inevitably opposed it to the idealism of Descartes. But his manner was as tart as his objections were keen; in a paragraph he reduced the whole spiritualistic philosophy to corporeal motion:

"Que dirons-nous maintenant," Hobbes wrote to Descartes, "si peut-être le raisonnement n'est rien autre chose qu'un assemblage et un enchaînement de noms par ce mot est? D'où il s'ensuivrait que par la raison nous ne concluons rien du tout touchant la nature des choses, mais seulement touchant leurs appellations; c'est-à-dire que par elle nous voyons simplement si nous assemblons bien ou mal les noms des choses, selon les conventions que nous avons faites à notre fantaisie touchant leurs significations. Si cela est ainsi, comme il peut être, le raisonnement dépendra des noms de l'imagination, et l'imagination peut-être (et ceci selon mon sentiment) du mouvement des organes corporels, et ainsi l'esprit ne sera rien autre chose qu'un mouvement en certaines parties du corps organique."²

Both men were irritated by the lack of sympathy of the other, and their relations never passed beyond an acquaintance.

¹Human Nature, Chap. XI, sec. 2 and 5. Ed.cit. IV, 59-62.

²Descartes, Troisièmes Objections Contre les Méditations. Oeuvres, ed. Simon, pp. 198-9.

The coolness between Descartes and Hobbes was natural, in view of their fundamental difference in aims. Hobbes was the first who extended the new philosophy of science into a complete philosophy of man and society. Descartes limited the mechanical theory to the inanimate world and to animals, and constructed on another basis an idealistic and spiritualistic philosophy which had much in common with Plato, Augustine and Anselm. The English opponents of Hobbes therefore found their best support in Descartes; for half a century Cartesian dualism was in England the generally accepted solution of the problem of materialism, not only among the apologists for religion, but even among the scientists of the Royal Society.

V

The Opposition to Hobbes: Cartesianism and Scepticism

About the middle of the century there appeared at Cambridge a group of remarkable men, nourished on Platonism, high-bred and sweetly reasonable amid the tumult and fanaticism of the Puritan upheaval, and distinguished from the rationalism and indifference of the Restoration by their sincere reverence for the Christian religion "as a doctrine sent from God both to elevate and sweeten human nature." In a period of episcopal degeneracy, the English Church would have "quite lost her esteem over the nation," wrote Gilbert Burnet, in his History of His Own Times, had it not been for the appearance of this "new set of men of another stamp."¹

¹Camb. Hist. of Eng. Lit., VIII, 311.

Open-minded in religion and theology, these men were quick to grasp the philosophical problem raised by the new science, and in defense of their religious feeling and Platonic thought, threw themselves into the new conflict with materialism.

Of these men, the most distinguished were Ralph Cudworth and Henry More. Both accepted the new science and the new astronomy, More declares that "it is plain to any man that is not prejudic'd" that Galileo's "System of the world is more naturall & genuine than that of Tycho's."¹ Cudworth did not dispute the new science, but objected to a materialistic interpretation of it. Imbued with the older notion that truth is purest at its source in antiquity, he distinguished in his learned work, The True Intellectual System of the Universe (1678), between the ancient atheistic and theistic atomism, the latter of which he believed to be derived from Moses.² From such heights of learning he felt himself able easily to weigh and estimate the atomistic science of his contemporaries, who were merely reviving ancient doctrine, "and that with no small pomp and ostentation of wisdom and philosophy."

Both More and Cudworth directed their polemics especially against Hobbes, and both approved of Descartes, though with some reservations. In the preface to the treatise on The Immortality of the Soul, a treatise refuting Hobbes' doctrine that the soul is material,³ More declares that he thinks "it is the most sober

¹More, Philosophical Poems, Cambridge (1647). p.390.

²Intellectual System, Book I, Chap. 1, sec. 10. Ed.London (1743) I, 12.

³More, Immortality of the Soul, London(1682). Chaps. VIII-XII. pp. 34-49.

and faithful advice that can be offered to the Christian World, that they would encourage the reading of Des-Cartes in all publick Schools and Universities. That the Students of Philosophy may be thoroughly exercised in the just extent of the Mechanical powers of Matter, how farre they will reach, and where they fall short. Which will be the best assistance to Religion that Reason and the Knowledge of Nature can afford. For by this means such as are intended to serve the Church will be armed betimes with sufficient strength to grapple with their proudest Deriders or Opposers. Whenas for want of this, we see how liable they are to be contemned and born down by every bold, though weak, pretender to the Mechanick Philosophy."¹

Cudworth gives Descartes the high praise of having revived the right kind, the theistic atomism of Moschus, whom Cudworth identified with Moses:

"For Renatus Cartesius first revived and restored the atomick philosophy, agreeably, for the most part, to that ancient Moschical and Pythagorick form; acknowledging besides extended substance and corporeal atoms, another cogitative incorporeal substance, and joyning metaphysicks or theology, together with physiology, to make up one entire system of philosophy."²

After some strictures on Descartes, he unreservedly condemns Hobbes, though not naming him:

"But shortly after this Cartesian restitution of the primitive atomology, that acknowledgeth incorporeal substance, we have had our Leucippus and Democritus too, who also revived and brought upon the stage that other atheistick atomology, that makes sensless and lifeless atoms to be the only principles of all things in the universe; thereby necessarily excluding, besides incorporeal substance and immortality of souls, a Deity and natural morality; as also making all actions and events materially and mechanically necessary."³

¹Ibid. Preface.

²Cudworth, op.cit. Book I, Chap. 3, sec. 38. Ed.cit. I, 174-5.

³Ibid. I, 175.

Whatever influence the Cambridge Platonists may have had on the tone of English life, they were unsuccessful in checking materialism. "The modern Atheists," wrote Glanvill, "are pretenders to the mechanick principles . . . the modern Sadduce pretends that all things we do, are performed by meer matter, and motion, and consequently that there is no such thing as an immaterial being."¹ But inasmuch as the new science, which was generally accepted, logically led to materialism, the idealistic philosophy as well as the Christian religion could find a place in human life only by restricting the limits of science. The apologists for the Royal Society therefore carefully distinguished between atheistic science, which dogmatically defined everything in materialistic terms and pretended to know the ultimate secrets of the universe, and their own more humble, but more accurate, work of ascertaining the characteristics and laws of the material world. "The Royal Society is abundantly cautious," wrote Sprat, its historian, "not to intermeddle in Spiritual Things." It is idle to suppose that they solved a question which is still debated. Our concern here is merely historical, to show how this problem forced a critique of science and of the human reason.

The first consequence of this new problem was a divorce of science and theology. So long as science and theology remained intimately united, as in the Aristotelianism of the Middle Ages, scientific progress seemed inconceivable. But already in the Middle Ages we have seen philosophy struggling for independence, under the theory of the "double truth." With the secularization of learning in the Renaissance which further liberated philosophy and science,

¹Glanvill, Joseph, Philosophia Pia, London (1671). pp. 23, 32.

the idea of progress in knowledge became quite general. The thought of Bacon's aphorism, Antiquitas saeculi juvenus mundi, so often quoted in the seventeenth century, had occurred also to Gilbert, to Galileo, to Giordano Bruno, and to Campanella.¹ To safeguard religion, in which of course no progress could be admitted, it became customary to contrast Divinity with other studies. In the sixteenth century, the Huguenot De Mornay admitted this distinction. "Car les doctrines humaines," he said, "plus le mond s'auance, & plus s'esclaircissent. Celle cy (la Divinité) au contraire, plus elle s'esloigne de ces premiers siecles, plus elle se trouue obscurcie, & n'est en aucune part plus claire que pres de la source, iusques à ce que par la naissance du vray Soleil elle a receu plus grande clarté que iamais."² In his Newes to the Universitie (1614), Thomas Overbury informs the learned that "the newest philosophie is soundest, the eldest Divinitie."³ Francis Osborn, in his Advice to a Son (1656), declares that "though my single Judgment is still ready to determine for Antiquity: which I would have you reverence, but not conclude infallible; yet I should take her word sooner in Divinity than any other Learning, because that is clearest at the beginning, all Studies else more muddy, receiving clarification from experience."⁴ This well-established distinction became all the more serviceable and pronounced with the acceptance of the new science.

¹Bacon, Works, ed. cit. II, 136, n.2.

²De Mornay, De la Verité de la Religion Chrestienne, Leyden (1651). p. 88.

³Overbury, Works, ed. Rimbault. London (1890). p. 179.

⁴Osborne, Works, 8th ed. London (1682). p. 92.

"In Theology," said Glanvill, "I put as great a difference between our New Lights and the Antient Truths, as between the Sun, and an unconcocted evanid Meteor. Though I confess that in Philosophy I'm a Seeker; yet cannot believe, that a Sceptick in Philosophy must be one in Divinity. Gospel-light began in its Zenith; and, as some say the Sun, was created in its Meridian strength and lustre. But the beginnings of Philosophy were in a Crepusculous obscurity; and It's yet scarce past the Dawn."¹

But such a distinction was hardly philosophical; the spheres of science and religion might coincide and contradictions might arise which would necessitate a choice between them. Materialism was in fact the extension of science into a complete philosophy of life, a substitute for religion. And therefore nothing less than a critique of science on its own ground could prevent it from completely excluding religion from life. This critique, however, was not accomplished by theologians, but by the apologists for science, who, to defend science against the charge of atheism, had to rescue it from the philosophical ambitions of Hobbes and his followers. Of these apologists the most eminent was Joseph Glanvill.

Glanvill's most important book is summarized in its title, The Vanity of Dogmatizing or Confidence in Opinions manifested in a Discourse of the Shortness and Uncertainty of our Knowledge and its causes, etc. (1661), republished as Scepsis Scientifica, or Confest Ignorance the way of Science (1665).

Glanvill dedicated the latter volume to the Royal Society, which immediately elected him a fellow. He everywhere speaks with admiration of the achievements of science, but constantly censures

¹Glanvill, Scepsis Scientifica, London (1665). pp. 139-40.

also the presumption of the "Mechanick Philosophers" who too hastily pass from hypothesis to dogmatism. In this criticism of science Glanvill was a true disciple of the sceptical philosophy, in which he was thoroughly at home. That he knew and used the Hypotyposes of Sextus Empiricus has been noticed by his biographer, Mr. Greenslet.¹ It is worth adding that he knew, and cited as authorities on scepticism and open-mindedness in science, both Montaigne and Charron.² Glanvill was therefore, like the scientists of his time, keenly aware of the limitations of scientific knowledge. The nature of the soul, the nature of bodies, the union of the soul with the body, -- all such ultimate knowledge he admitted was beyond the possibility of science finding out. Even causality, he said, since it is insensible, cannot be directly known; it must remain a mystery. We can conclude causality only from concomitancy, but "to argue from concomitancy to causality, is not infallibly conclusive: Yea in this way lies notorious delusion."³ But the most dangerous error of all is the tendency to assume that those working principles which science must constantly be formulating, are an ultimate and true knowledge of the processes of nature. Glanvill called them hypotheses. For such caution he found a precedent in the admired Descartes:

"Though the Grand Secretary of Nature, the miraculous Des-Cartes hath here infinitely out-done all the Philosophers (who) went before him, in giving a particular and Analytical account of the

¹ Greenslet, Ferris, Joseph Glanvill, N.Y. (1900). pp. 95-ff.

² Scepsis Scientifica, London (1665). pp. 114, 172.

³ Ibid. p. 142.

Universal Fabrick: yet he intends his Principles but for Hypotheses, and never pretends that things are really or necessarily, as he hath supposed them: but that they may be admitted pertinently to solve the Phaenomena, and are convenient supposals for the use of life. Nor can any further account be expected from humanity, but how things may have been made consonantly to sensible nature: but infallibly to determine how they truly were effected, is proper to him only that saw them in Chaos, and fashion'd them out of that confused mass. For to say, the principles of Nature must needs be such as our Philosophy makes them, is to set bounds to Omnipotence, and to confine infinite power and wisdom to our shallow models."¹

By such thorough-going critique Glanvill sought to counteract the high pretension of materialistic science to an absolute dominion over all life. The methods of science were at best uncertain, and applicable only to a small section of the universe; beyond science there was the vast infinity of the unknowable, where the reason could only wander astray, and faith and revelation alone could guide men up to God.

In this scepticism regarding the philosophical value of scientific hypothesis, Glanvill was not alone; he was in fact representative of the orthodox and conservative thought of his time, wherever it was combatting "Hobbism." The Royal Society indicated their approval by electing Glanvill to membership. One of its most distinguished members, Boyle, the founder of modern chemistry, was especially active in opposition to the materialistic philosophy. In one of his many philosophical tracts, A Free Inquiry into the Vulgar Notion of Nature, written in 1666 but not published until 1682, he attempted to show what dangers lurked in the popular use of the word

¹Ibid. pp. 155-6.

"nature"; it always tended to signify something more than processes, the mythologizing imagination was always making of it an explanation of the world; whereas the scientist, strictly limiting himself to demonstrable facts, was forced to conclude that the only possible explanation of the visible world is in God.¹ So general was this sceptical attitude towards scientific hypotheses that even undergraduates at Cambridge were nursed in it. In 1688 Matthew Prior, then at St. John's College, wrote a gaudy ode On Exod. III, 14 -- I Am That I am, the theme of which is the inadequacy of reason to understand the world and the necessity of exercising faith and reverence to reach the high abode of the mysterious God who revealed himself to Moses. A stanza will show how definitely Prior applied his critique to materialistic science:

"Man does with dangerous curiosity
 These unfathom'd wonders try:
 With fancied rules and arbitrary laws
 Matter and motion he restrains;
 And studied lines and fictitious circles draws:
 Then with imagin'd sovereignty
 Lord of his new hypothesis he reigns.
 He reigns: how long? till some usurper rise;
 And he too, mighty thoughtful, mighty wise,
 Studies new lines, and other circles feigns.
 From this last toil again what knowledge flows?
 Just as much, perhaps, as shows,
 That all his predecessor's rules
 Were empty cant, all jargon of the schools;
 That he on t'other's ruin rears his throne;
 And shows his friend's mistake, and thence confirms his
 own."²

¹Boyle, Robert, Philosophical Works, London (1725). II, 108-149. -- Cf. a sympathetic study of Boyle by Nourrisson, Philosophies de la Nature, Paris (1887). pp. 43-84.

²Prior, Poetical Works, ed. Johnson, R.B., London (1907). I, 23-27. Cf. Prior's sceptical attitude in maturer poems: Alma, or the Progress of the Mind, and Solomon on the Vanity of the World, Book I, On Knowledge.

Nor should we be surprised to find in John Dryden, a man unusually sensitive to the veering of the winds of doctrine of his time, essentially the same ideas as Glanvill's on the relation of science and religion. He admired the practical achievements of English science and was ready to give the Royal Society unstinted praise.¹ But, though he knew well the work of Hobbes, he was certainly not a disciple; the dogmatic temper of Hobbes he referred to as "magisterial authority" and he even suspected the sage of Malmesbury of insincerity.² Nor could a man so convinced as Dryden of the limitations of human reason, well be content with a materialistic philosophy of science. Both of his poems on religion, though one defended Catholicism and the other Anglicanism, agree in this distrust of the reason.

"Dim as the borrowed beams of moon and stars
To lonely, weary, wandering travellers
Is Reason to the soul,"

this was the text of Religio Laici. And in The Hind and the Panther he echoes:

"Let Reason then at her own quarry fly,
But how can finite grasp infinity? . . .
Rest then, my soul, from endless anguish freed:
Nor sciences thy guide, nor sense thy creed.
Faith is the best insurer of thy bliss . . ."³

This reconciliation of science and religion by assigning limits to the former, was of course far from final, and the criticism of the human reason has since reached far greater pro-

¹Epistle To Dr. Charleton, and Annus Mirabilis, stanzas 155-166.

²Dryden, Essays, ed. W.P.Ker, Oxford (1900). I, 259. Cf. I, 153 and II, 248, 252.

³The Hind and the Panther, Part I, ll. 104-5, 146-8.

fundity. But we have seen how rapidly the problem in its modern form was evolved from the spiritual cosmology of the sixteenth century, and how religion, which in the older philosophy, as in Sir John Davies, had sought its support in a demonstrative rationalism, allied itself in the seventeenth century with scepticism. If, as Donne said, all Divinity is Love and Wonder, the scepticism of the English scientists stimulated at least the sentiment of wonder, a sentiment neglected by the dry materialism of the school of Hobbes. The imaginative Glanvill conveyed in rhythms that recall Browne, a sense of the mystery of the world both in its vastness and its infinite minuteness, and of the miracle of man among all these unexplainable wonders:

"Whatever I look upon within the amplitude of heaven and earth, is evidence of humane ignorance; For all things are a great darkness to us, and we are so unto our selves: The plainest things are as obscure, as the most confessedly mysterious; and the Plants we tread on, are as much above us, as the Stars and Heavens. The things that touch us are as distant from us, as the Pole; and we are as much strangers to our selves, as to the inhabitants of America."¹

Had Glanvill been of a religious nature, his scientific wonder might have led him to a sense of the mystery of faith. But he and his fellow apologists for science fell upon an age prosaic in religion. The poetry of Glanvill is confined to his scientific writings; in religion he shared the temper and the doctrines of the Deists.² Perhaps the deepest, certainly the most frequent, religious

¹Address to the Royal Society, in Scep sis Scientifica. Ed.cit.

²He gives a Deistic statement of the essentials of religion in The Friendly Agreement between Reason and Religion, published with Philosophia Pia, ed. cit. pp. 156-7.

sentiment in the writings of the scientists is their admiration of God as the artificer of a marvellous universe. Their scepticism made a place for religion, but they were too rationalistic in temper to need more than the mildness of Deism. No Pascal appeared among them. And yet, so fundamental and modern was their thought, that the scepsis scientifica survived the Age of Reason and has become an important conception even in the discussions of the present century.¹

¹ See for instance, More, P.E., Huxley, in The Drift of Romanticism, Boston (1913); and Boutroux, Emile, La Religion et les Limites de la Science, in Science et Religion, Paris (1908).

CHAPTER SIX

DIFFUSION OF SCEPTICAL THOUGHT IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

I. Critical Temper of the Seventeenth Century.- II. Sceptical Tendency in the Thought of the Liberal Churchmen.- III. Sir Thomas Browne: Scepticism and Religious Wonder.- IV. Francis Osborn: Scepticism and the New Courtier Type.

In the preceding chapters we have already traced some of the effects of Renaissance scepticism on the thought of the seventeenth century, especially in connection with naturalism in ethice and the philosophical crisis precipitated by the new science. In those studies we have seen how the sceptical tendencies of the sixteenth century contributed to the more modern thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth. But after establishing this continuity of certain phases, one is led further to inquire what importance scepticism had in the whole of seventeenth century thought, and whether it was cultivated only by a small group of intellectual rebels and social pariahs, or whether it permeated the educated class. In the present chapter some representative and widely popular writers will be studied together, with a view to estimating the diffusion of the sceptical tendency of the age in various intellectual and social groups. It may appear at first paradoxical to discuss together men of such diverse minds and temperaments as Baxter and Osborn, Falkland and Browne, Hales and Milton. But by such a consideration of one phase of writers not otherwise associated together by students of English literature, we may be able to

arrive at a more thorough appreciation of the importance of the sceptical impulse in the seventeenth century.

I

The Critical Temper of the Seventeenth Century

Almost immediately the English spirit of the seventeenth century manifested itself as a reaction against the exuberance of the Renaissance. Fundamentally this reaction was undoubtedly due to the exhaustion of energies in the expansiveness of the preceding period, but it expressed itself in a multiplicity of ways determined often by accident. It is everywhere evident in the political conflicts which dominated the age. Instead of the generous enthusiasm and national unity of the days of the great Queen, the division into parties now produced a general irritability; and quite by accident England at the same time had a king who of all her monarchs irritated the nation most and was least concerned about conciliating popular opinion. The pretension of James I to absolute monarchy and his high-handed treatment of Parliament, a policy which his son inherited from him, cost the country the distress of civil war and Charles I his head. But before this crisis, in fact immediately upon his accession, James drew upon himself criticism for a multitude of more or less serious errors, all of which alienated the country from the crown and made patriotic Englishmen sigh for the palmy days of Elizabeth.

James humiliated the English by surrounding himself with Scotch courtiers. This was of course in itself injudicious, but it

became dangerous in a monarch ruled, as James was, by favorites who pandered skilfully to the king's weaknesses. Lord Howard advised Sir John Harrington on how to succeed at the new court: he must dress to the king's taste, for many gallants have "failed in their suits for want of due observance of these matters." Nothing, of course, can be done except through the favorites. "Robert Carr is now most likely to win the prince's affection, and doth it wonderously in a little time." Success depended then on such secrets as this: "Do not of yourself say, 'This is good, or bad'; but, 'If it were your majesty's good opinion, I myself should think so and so.'" The lord was unable to repress a scornful plaint: "You have lived to see the trim of old times, and what passed in the queen's days. These things are no more the same."¹

Morals and conduct at the court of the new monarch were inconceivably vulgar and unrestrained. Sir John Harrington, who in the good days of yore had been disciplined by the Queen herself for circulating among her maids a translation of an obnoxious canto from Ariosto, was shocked and grieved by the degradation he saw. A witty letter of his, describing the revels in 1606 in honor of the King of Denmark, conveys the tone of the court:

"The sports began each day," he says, "in such manner and such sort as had well-nigh persuaded me of Mahomet's paradise . . . I think the Dane hath strangely wrought on our good English nobles; for those whom I never could get to taste liquor, now follow the fashion and wallow in beastly delights. The ladies abandon their sobriety, and are seen to roll about in intoxication." At a great

¹Aikin, Lucy, Memoirs of the Court of King James the First, London (1822). I, 326-330.

feast several ladies were to come into the presence of the royal guest, representing such Christian and Royal attributes as Faith, Hope, Charity, Victory and Peace. But, though "the entertainment and show went forward," says Harrington, "most of the presenters went backward, or fell down; wine did so occupy their upper chambers."

"Now did appear in rich dress, Faith, Hope and Charity: Hope did essay to speak, but wine rendered her endeavours so feeble that she withdrew, and hoped the king would excuse her brevity: Faith was then alone, for I am certain she was not joined with good works, and left the court in a staggering condition: Charity came to the king's feet, and seemed to cover the multitude of sins her sisters had committed; in some sort she made obeisance and brought gifts, but said she would return home again, as there was no gift which heaven had not already given his majesty. She then returned to Faith and Hope, who were both sick . . . in the lower hall. Next came Victory in bright armour, and by a strange medley of versification did endeavour to make suit to the king. But Victory did not triumph long; for, after a much lamentable utterance, she was led away like a silly captive, and laid to sleep in the outer steps of the antichamber. Now Peace did make entry, and strive to get foremost to the king; but I grieve to tell how great wrath she did discover unto those of her attendants; and much contrary to her semblance, most rudely made war with her olive branch, and laid on the pates of those who did oppose her coming.

"I have much marvelled at these strange pageantries," continues Harrington, "and they do bring to my remembrance what passed of this sort in our queen's days; of which I was sometimes an humble presenter and assistant: but I did ne'er see such lack of good order, discretion and sobriety, as I have now done."¹

At such a court it is to be expected that the course of events will be determined by low intrigue. The murder of Overbury, the execution of Raleigh, the ascendancy of the Catholic faction in the

¹Nugae Antiquae, I, 348. Quoted by Aikin, op. cit. I, 278-281.

foreign policy, and the ignominious attempt to form an alliance between Prince Charles and the Infanta of Spain, are only a few of the incidents which more and more alienated king and country, and are sufficient to remind us how completely James was out of touch with his people.

After the high national spirit which had united all factions in the time of Elizabeth, there succeeded a period of dejection and disillusionment. The glories of England were visibly in decline. In a passage in the second book of Britannia's Pastorals (1616), Browne indignantly describes the decay in Plymouth harbor of that great English fleet,

"whose hot alarms
Have made Iberia tremble, and her towers
Prostrate themselves before our iron showers;
While their proud builders' hearts have been inclin'd
To shake, as our brave ensigns, with the wind
But now our leaders want; those vessels lie
Rotting, like houses through ill husbandry;
And on their masts, where oft the ship-boy stood,
Or silver trumpets charm'd the brackish flood,
Some wearied crew is set; and daily seen
Their sides instead of pitch caulk'd o'er with green."¹

Not only was the navy neglected, but the army was decayed and disbanded and the former soldiers wandered over England as paupers.

"Can I behold a man that in the field
Or at a breach hath taken on his shield
More darts than ever Roman; that hath spent
Many a cold December in no tent
But such as earth and heaven make; that hath been
Except in iron plates not long time seen;
Upon whose body may be plainly told
More wounds than his lank purse doth almsdeeds hold;
O! can I see this man, advent'ring all,
Be only grac'd with some poor hospital,

¹Browne, William, Britannia's Pastorals, Book 2, Song 4, ll. 51-96. ed. Goodwin, I, 313-315.

Or may be worse, entreating at his door
 For some relief whom he secur'd before,
 And yet not show my grief? First may I learn
 To see, and yet forget how to discern;
 My hands neglectful be at any need,
 Or to defend my body, or to feed,
 Ere I respect those times that rather give him
 Hundreds to punish than one to relieve him."¹

In departing from his pastoral style to write these stinging arraignments of his time, Browne voiced the indignation of the great mass of Englishmen who felt deeply the disappointment of England's splendid promise in the time of Sidney, Spenser, Drake and the great Queen.

Perhaps no one felt more keenly the change which had come over England than Fulke Greville, who survived for so many years his youthful friend Sidney. He who had felt the pulse of the greater age, was disconsolate amid the ignobility which ensued. "He doubtless felt," says a recent student of him,² that his opinions were those of the age of Elizabeth, and he certainly believed them to be in contrast with those of the age of James and Charles." He felt baffled in trying to bring into active life that spirit of idealism on which he had been nourished in his youth, and withdrew to live over again in contemplation, the age which he had found more congenial.

¹Browne, ed. cit. I, 315-6.-- Lucy Hutchinson prizes her father, who held important positions under James, such as Victualler of the Navy and Lieutenant of the Tower, for his liberality and kindness, and she says, "when, through the ingratitude and vice of that age, many of the wives and children of Queen Elizabeth's glorious captains were reduced to poverty, his purse was their common treasury." Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson, London (1848). p. 13.

²Croll, Morris W., The Works of Fulke Greville, Philadelphia (1903). p. 58.

"The difference which I have found between times," so he began his Life of Sidney, "and consequently the changes of life into which their naturall vicissitudes doe violently carry men, as they have made deep furrowes of impressions into my heart, so the same heavy wheelles caused me to retire my thoughts from free traffique with the world, and rather seek comfortable ease or employment in the safe memory of dead men, than disquiet in a doubtfull conversation amongst the living."¹

And in his sombre conclusion to the same work he declares that he had written his plays only for those on whose foot the Black Oxe of Care had already trod, "to those only," he continues, "that are weather-beaten in the sea of this World, such as having lost the sight of their gardens and groves, study to saile on a right course among rocks and quick-sands."²

It is of course easily possible to exaggerate the importance of the Stuarts in the intellectual history of the seventeenth century; their influence was provocative more than creative or even directive. After every era of expansion comes an era of concentration, an era primarily of criticism and painful readjustment; the seventeenth century was such an age of concentration. But James gave form and focus to the current tendencies which were beyond his comprehension and control. He may be said to have dominated his age, in a perverse sense, by provoking dissension, just as truly as Elizabeth dominated hers by promoting national unity and good feeling. It was his arrogant and dogmatic assumption of the divine right of kings, his complete lack of political sagacity, which precipitated the struggle for political and religious liberty, and

¹Greville, Fulke, Works, ed. Grosart, London (1870). IV, 5.

²Ibid. p. 223.

thus defined the course of events even under his successor. For Charles, though the moral tone of his court was vastly better than that of his father's, pursued the policy of James in church and state, the policy of Buckingham and Laud. In both spheres the Stuart policy was coercive and tyrannical and provoked a powerful resistance, manifested not only in Parliament and the Parliamentary army, but in political thought and in the development of new theories of religious liberty and tolerance. Such men as Falkland, Hales, Chillingworth and Taylor, driven to investigate the pretensions to infallibility on the part of church or individual, were led thereby to a more searching and somewhat sceptical examination of the human reason. The political crisis in church and state forced them to consider the problem of knowledge, the great philosophical preoccupation of the century, both in England and France. Even in scholarship, which in the sixteenth century had been largely cumulative and assimilative, the new critical spirit is evident and does not shrink from an independent examination of political and ecclesiastical pretensions. Selden's History of Tithes (1618), written in the moderate spirit of a seeker only after truth, nevertheless disclosed the spuriousness of the claim of the church to a divine right to impose taxes. Selden was forced to retract this book; but that he retained the independence of thought of the critical scholar, is apparent everywhere in his Table-Talk. "The clergy," he says, "would have us believe them against our own Reason, as the Woman would have had her Husband against his own Eyes: What! will you believe your own Eyes before your own sweet Wife?"¹ All pretension to infallibility or divine right of king or

¹Selden, Table-Talk, ed. Gollanz (Temple Classics). p. 29.

bishop was swept away by his great learning and sound sense. "A King is a thing Men have made for their own Sakes, for quietness' sake," he declared, "just as in a Family one Man is appointed to buy the Meat."¹ And Selden knew, what many Englishmen learned in the turbulence of the first half of the seventeenth century, that truth was not to be reached by party affiliation, and that quiet and peace were necessary before the critical spirit could dissolve the fierce fanaticism and dogmatism which blinded the contending factions. "In troubled Water you can scarce see your Face, or see it very little, till the Water be quiet and stand still. So in troubled times you can see little Truth; when times are quiet and settled, then Truth appears."²

Falkland and the liberal churchmen already mentioned, Selden's contemporaries, withdrew from the turmoil in order to find truth in the quiet of their libraries. But they all became more and more impressed by the great likelihood of error in human thought. They learned, among other things, an intellectual humility which, though they were themselves perhaps unaware of the fact, was tinged with philosophical scepticism. They prepared the way for the modern theory of toleration, for Locke's Letter on Toleration and for the Toleration Act of 1689.

II

Sceptical Tendency in the Thought of the Liberal Churchmen

No sooner had the individualistic spirit of the Reformation clearly manifested itself in the continual secession of

¹Ibid. p. 64.

²Ibid. p. 143.

sects, in the audacious rejection of what had been regarded as essential doctrine, than the leaders began to check it. Calvin maintained strict discipline in Geneva, denouncing the freer sect called the Libertines, and even burning Servetus in 1553 for anti-Trinitarian teachings. Luther allied himself with German princes, and Lutheranism became a state religion. In the England of Elizabeth three religious factions, the Catholics, the Anglicans and the Puritans, were all ambitious of supremacy. Protestantism, which had destroyed the Medieval unity of the European church, in its turn sought to enforce by political power a uniformity of creed and ceremonial within its own territorial limits. It ridiculed the pretended infallibility of the Pope, and then acted on the assumption of its own infallibility. The earliest Protestant leaders were as zealous as Catholics for unity and uniformity, each believing that his own sect alone held the one verifiable and unpolluted truth.

But Protestantism nevertheless had something more than fanatical zeal; it was animated by a spirit of liberty which, checked as it was by the political control of opinion by state churches, could never be suppressed. Arians, Anabaptists, Brownists, Familists, these sects of the sixteenth century were only the beginning. In the seventeenth century the spirit of independence produced numerous others: Antinomians, Millenaries or Chiliasts, Seekers, Anti-Sabbatarians, Traskites, Soul-Sleepers or Moralists, Divorcers, Anti-Scripturists, Socinians, even some called Sceptics or Questionists.¹

¹Masson, David, *Life of Milton*, London (1873). III, 136-ff. Numerous pamphlets were directed against these sects. Thomas Edwards, in a treatise entitled Gangraena: or, a Catalogue and Discovery of many of the Errors, Heresies, Blasphemies, and Pernicious Practices of the Sectaries of this time (1645), made a list of 176

This multiplication of sects was inevitable in such a secessionist movement as Protestantism. And though its leaders had at first been blind to this fact, English churchmen of the seventeenth century began to see more and more clearly that the attempt to enforce uniformity was not only futile, but wrong. They came to the conclusion that only by hazarding wide diversity of opinion, only by seeking by many paths, even though most must be erroneous, could truth ever be found. They therefore placed themselves philosophically at the opposite pole from Medievalism, with its insistence on uniformity and unity not only within nations but throughout the world. Bossuet defined a heretic as a man who had formed an opinion; there spoke the Medievalist, the Catholic, who wrote his Histoire des Variations des Églises Protestantes to show the absurdity and self-destructiveness of the Protestant spirit. But his views had already been answered by an English champion of liberty. "Where there is much desire to learn," Milton wrote in his Areopagitica, "there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making."¹

"errors, heresies, and blasphemies," among which were the following:

"That the Scriptures are a dead letter, and no more to be credited than the writings of men."

"That right Reason is the rule of Faith."

"That the magistrate may not punish for blasphemies, nor for denying the Scriptures, nor for denying that there is a God."

"That the soul dies with the body, and all things shall have an end, but God only."

"That Jesus Christ is not very God: no otherwise may he be called the Son of God but as he was man."

"That, in point of Religion, even in the Articles of Faith and principles of Religion, there's nothing certainly to be believed and built on; only that all men ought to have liberty of conscience and liberty of prophesying."

Masson, III, 143-5.

-Milton, Of Education, etc. Ed. Lockwood, Boston (1911). p. 120.

Falkland and the other liberal thinkers of the seventeenth century church found themselves in the midst of conflicting dogmatisms, all seeking to enforce their conceptions of truth upon others. The Catholics believed in the infallibility of the Church of Rome, the Puritans in the absolute correctness of the Puritans in creed and ceremonial, the Anglicans in the divine right of King and Bishop. Religious certainty was the burning question, with which all parties were most deeply concerned. Falkland subjected the idea of infallibility to a rigorous criticism, with the conclusion that no man can escape from the responsibility and necessity of depending on his own reason, weak and untutored though it be. For infallibility itself must be proved to the reason before it can be accepted as a principle of religious authority; next, it must be demonstrated to the reason that this infallibility belongs to one church and to no other; and finally, suppose the Church of Rome to be infallible, yet the individual must understand her teachings by means of his own corrupt reason, and thus we return again to the individualism from which we expressly sought to escape. But Falkland had no regrets; he preferred erring sincerity to that external uniformity which he thought was all that an infallible church could secure.

"Grant the Church," he says, "to be infallible, yet methinks he that denies it, and employs his reason to seek if it be true, should be in as good case as he that believeth it, and searcheth not at all the truth of the proposition he receives. For I cannot see why he should be saved because by reason of his parents' belief, or the religion of the country, or some such accident, the truth was offered to his understanding, when, had the contrary been offered, he would have received that. And the other damned that believes falsehood upon as good

ground as the other doth truth, unless the Church be like a conjuror's circle, that will keep a man from the devil, though he came into it by chance."¹

Falkland kept open house at Great Tew, his estate near Oxford, in the generous manner of the great gentlemen of that time. And from the group which frequented his home in the thirties, sprang the liberal party within the Anglican Church. Although Falkland had many friendships with poets and men of letters as well as with theologians,² his own interests tended, with those of his time, more and more towards Divinity. Clarendon has described the life at Tew:

Falkland's house, he says, "being within ten or twelve miles of the university, looked like the university itself, by the company that was always found there. There were Dr. Sheldon, Dr. Morley, Dr. Hammond, Dr. Earles, Mr. Chillingworth, and indeed all men of eminent parts and faculties in Oxford, besides those who resorted thither from London; who all found their lodgings there, as ready as in the colleges; nor did the lord of the house know of their coming or going, nor who were in his house, till he came to dinner, or supper, where all still met; otherwise, there was no troublesome ceremony or constraint, to forbid men to come to the house, or to make them weary of staying there; so that many came thither to study in a better air, finding all the books they could desire in his library, and all the persons together, whose company they could wish, and not find in any other society. Here Mr. Chillingworth wrote, and

¹Quoted by Tulloch, John, Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth Century, 2nd ed., Edinburgh (1874). I, 164-5. I have had to rely on Tulloch for my information on Falkland and Hales; Tulloch had no special interest in the sceptical tendency in these men, nor even called it by that name, but his liberal quotations have been serviceable for my purpose.

²See Suckling's famous A Sessions of the Poets, written probably in 1637. Falkland is represented as

"of late so gone with Divinity
That he had almost forgot his Poetry,
Though to say the truth (and Apollo did know it)
He might have been both his Priest and his Poet."

193.
Spingarn, Critical Essays of the Seventeenth Century, Oxford (1908). I,

formed, and modelled, his excellent book against the learned Jesuit Mr. Nott, after frequent debates upon the most important particulars; in many of which he suffered himself to be overruled by the judgment of his friends, though in others he still adhered to his own fancy, which was sceptical enough, even in the highest points."¹

The reply to Knott was Chillingworth's The Religion of Protestants (1637), one of the most potent works of the time in fostering the liberal spirit. John Hales is not mentioned by Clarendon as one of the group, but he is included in Suckling's poem, and is said by his eighteenth century biographer to have frequented the society of Falkland, Suckling and Ben Jonson.²

Hales and Chillingworth, like Falkland, sought the via media; they rejected the Catholic doctrine of infallibility, pursued it through the labyrinths of theological argument to its last retreat; but though they were individualists in philosophy and admitted that in the last analysis each man must be his own judge of truth, they sought to encourage and preserve Christian unity. They accepted, as the basis of all doctrine, the inspiration of the Bible; and inasmuch as the interpretations of the Bible varied, they sought concord by eliminating the dark places and disputable doctrines as not essential to salvation. On the important doctrines, they thought, all Christians could agree, and as for the other points, free discussion, conducted in a charitable and reasonable spirit, should be permitted to the curious. But let no one pretend to

¹Life of Clarendon, Oxford (1857). I, 39-40.

²An Historical and Critical Account of the Life and Writings of the Ever-Memorable Mr. John Hales, by P. Des Maizeaux, published in 1719. See Tulloch, op. cit. I, 193.

certitude where the best thought of Christendom is divided.

Such a position was of course a compromise, but it was in its time very liberal. Hales and Chillingworth were vigorous and effective champions of liberty of thought, and all the more effective because they were within the church, not attacking it. They understood that the pathway out of ignorance and error is steep and rugged and tortuous, and that often it leads, not to certain knowledge, but only to doubt. They denounced the Medieval doctrine that intellectual error is a crime; they denied the justice, the right, the desirability of that intellectual unity to which the Church in the Middle Ages, and to a large extent also in the Renaissance, had aspired. "It is not the variety of opinions," said Hales in one of his sermons, "but our own perverse wills, who think it meet that all should be conceited as ourselves are, which hath so inconvenienced the Church."¹ Their charity and tolerance taught them that differences of opinion are not always a sign of moral depravity, that doubt is not necessarily sin. They restricted the meaning of the terrible word "heresy."

"For heresy," said Hales, "is an act of will, not of reason, and is indeed a lie, not a mistake, else how could that known speech of Austin go for true, Errare possum, haereticus esse nolo? . . . But can any man avouch that Arius and Nestorius, and others that taught erroneously concerning the Trinity, or the person of our Saviour, did maliciously invent what they taught, and not rather fall upon it by error and mistake? Till that be done, and that upon good evidence, we will think no worse of all parties than needs we must, and take these rents in the Church to be at the worst but schisms upon matter of opinion."²

¹Quoted by Tulloch, op. cit. I, 224.

²Quoted by Tulloch, op. cit. I, 228.

Chillingworth likewise maintained everywhere in his famous treatise that the differences between sects were in regard to points not fundamental, where the resolution of doubts was unnecessary or even impossible.

This liberalism was not confined to the group gathered about Falkland. Jeremy Taylor, in his Discourse on the Liberty of Propheying (1647), admitted the impossibility of intellectual unity in the church.

"The infinite variety of opinions in matters of religion," he says, "as they have troubled christendom with interests, factions, and partialities, so have they caused great divisions of the heart and variety of thoughts and designs among pious and prudent men. For they all, seeing the inconveniences which the disunion of persuasions and opinions have produced directly or accidentally, have thought themselves obliged to stop this inundation of mischiefs, and have made attempts accordingly . . . All men resolved upon this, that though they had not hit upon the right, yet some way must be thought upon to reconcile differences in opinion, thinking so long as this variety should last, Christ's kingdom was not advanced, and the work of the gospel went on but slowly. Few men in the mean time considered that so long as men had such variety of principles, such several constitutions, educations, tempers and distempers, hopes, interests, and weaknesses, degrees of light and degrees of understanding, it was impossible all should be of one mind; and what is impossible to be done, is not necessary it should be done."¹

Taylor repeats the distinction quoted above from Hales, between the sin of heresy and intellectual error. "For heresy is not an error of the understanding, but an error of the will."² He emphasized more the agreement which he found on a few things, than the multitude of disagreements.

¹Taylor, Jeremy, Works, London (1849). V, 365-6.

²Ibid. V, 382.

Why, he asks, "should I hate such persons whom God loves and who love God, who are partakers of Christ and Christ hath a title to them, who dwell in Christ and Christ in them, because their understandings have not been brought up like mine, have not had the same masters, they have not met with the same books nor the same company, or have not the same interest, or are not so wise, or else are wiser; that is, for some reason or other which I neither do understand nor ought to blame, have not the same opinions that I have, and do not determine their school-questions to the sense of my sect or interest?"¹

These expressions of tolerance, of latitudinarianism, were a sign of the reaction against the dogmatism of the Reformed as well as of the Catholic church. The zeal for conquest which had inspired the powerful Protestant sects, was gradually exhausted in the long and wearisome conflict of the seventeenth century. Richard Baxter, in looking back over his long career, noted the change which had come over himself.

"In my youth," he says, in that intellectual autobiography written in the wisdom and mellow-ness of years, "in my youth I was quickly past my Fundamentals, and was running up into a multitude of Controversies, and greatly delighted with metaphysical and scholastick Writings . . . But the elder I grew the smaller stress I laid upon these Controversies and Curiosities (though still my intellect abhorreth Confusion), as finding far greater Uncertainties in them, than I at first discerned, and finding less Usefulness comparatively, even where there is the greatest Certainty . . . And thus I observed it was," he continues, "with old bishop Usher, and with many other Men."²

The fierce fanaticism of the first half of the century had been succeeded by tolerance and mild scepticism, even among the leaders of the factions.

¹Ibid. V, 346.

²Reliquiae Baxterianae, London (1696). p. 126.

To us these seventeenth century liberals seem orthodox enough, but in their day they took an extremely forward and exposed position. Their reasonableness, their willingness to simplify and therefore to discard doctrines, their toleration, their sympathy for despised sects, all drew on them a great deal of suspicion. The untrustworthy gossip, Aubrey, has recorded that Falkland and Hales were the first Socinians in England, and that Chillingworth in his youth much delighted in Sextus Empiricus.¹ And these charges of Socinianism, though somewhat unjust to the opinions of Hales and Chillingworth, were not without foundation. The Socinians denied that the Scripture teaches the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, or the satisfaction of justice by the sacrifice of Christ.² But even they must be included in any church which accepts Scripture as its doctrinal basis, allowing each individual to interpret it according to his own best insight and conscience. These liberal Anglicans sometimes seemed ready to accept this conclusion. "Why may not I go," asked Hales, "if occasion require, to an Arian church, so there be no Arianism expressed in their liturgy? And were liturgies and public forms of service so framed as that they admitted not of particular and private fancies, but contained only such things as in which all Christians do agree, schisms on opinion were utterly vanished."³

These Latitudinarians, moreover, prepared the way just as truly as the Socinians for the later Deistic movement. Their

¹Aubrey, John, Brief Lives, ed. Clark, Oxford (1898). I, 150, 173, 279.

²Punjer, History of the Christian Philosophy of Religion, trans. Flint, Edinburgh (1887). pp. 191-207.

³Quoted by Tulloch, op. cit. I, 228.

individualism, their rationalistic method and spirit, their emphasis on simplification of doctrine, all tended towards natural theology. Even Richard Baxter experienced, after his youthful confidence, such strong doubts "that had I been void of internal Experience, and the Adhesion of Love, and the special help of God, and had not discerned more Reason for my Religion than I did when I was younger, I had certainly Apostatized to Infidelity."¹ As all truths are not equally certain, therefore, he said,

"I do more of late than ever discern a necessity of a methodical procedure in maintaining the Doctrine of Christianity, and of beginning at Natural Verities, as presupposed fundamentally to supernatural . . . My certainty that I am a Man, is before my certainty that there is a God . . . My certainty that there is a God, is greater than my certainty that he requireth love and holiness of his Creature: My certainty of this is greater than my certainty of the Life of Reward and Punishment hereafter: My certainty of that is greater than my certainty of the endless duration of it, and of the immortality of individuate souls: My certainty of the Deity is greater than my certainty of the Christian Faith: My certainty of the Christian Faith in its Essentials, is greater than my certainty of the Perfection and Infallibility of all the Holy Scriptures: My certainty of that is greater than my certainty of the meaning of many particular Texts, and so of the truth of many particular Doctrines, or of the Canonicalness of some certain Books."²

Baxter was not a Deist. But as so often has happened in the history of thought, Baxter found it was good tactics to occupy some of the enemy territory.

Finally, all these liberal churchmen learned a humility of the reason, a keen sense of the limitations of the power of know-

¹Reliquiae Baxterianae, p. 127.

²Reliquiae Baxterianae, p. 128.

ledge, which was at least edged with scepticism. Aubrey's story of Chillingworth reading Sextus Empiricus, whether authentic or not, has its significance; it indicates that somebody at that time saw the sceptical trend in the thought of the churchman. "Although I be as desirous to know what I should and what I should not," said Jeremy Taylor, "as any of my brethren the sons of Adam; yet I find that the more I search, the further I am from being satisfied, and make but few discoveries save of my own ignorance."¹ The constant text of all of them was the vanity of dogmatizing. They effectively criticized the Medieval ideal of the intellectual unity of Christendom, and laid the foundations for a theory of tolerance within the church. And therefore, though they remained orthodox in their creed, their spirit and principles liberalized English religious thought from within by such an extension of religious and philosophical individualism as only dissenters attempted in the sixteenth century. They carried one step further the disintegrating movement of the Reformation.

III

Sir Thomas Browne: Scepticism and Religious Wonder

In 1643 a physician at Norwich was forced, by the previous unauthorized printings from an imperfect manuscript copy, to give to the world his Religio Medici, a private confession of faith written some eight years earlier. It was, he explained in the preface, "a private Exercise directed to my self" and "what is delivered therein,

¹Taylor, ed. cit. V, 363.

was rather a memorial unto me, than an Example or Rule unto any other." The book immediately had a great vogue, not only in England, but on the Continent, where it was appreciated for its substance rather than style in a Latin translation. It was no nine days' wonder; twenty years later a friend of Pepys declared that "in all his life these three books were the most esteemed and generally cried up for wit in the world -- Religio Medici, Osborne's Advice to a Son, and Hudibras."¹ Thus launched auspiciously on his career of authorship, Thomas Browne published more willingly his later works, the most ambitious of which was Pseudodoxia Epidemica, a massive attack on the superstitions of the science and learning of the time. These superstitious errors Browne attributed to four causes: first, the common infirmity of human nature, so painfully exhibited by our ancestors in the Garden of Eden; second the ignorance and inclination to error among the uneducated; third, credulity, supinity, and adherence to authority; and fourth, that "invisible Agent, and secret promoter without us, whose activity is undiscerned, and plays in the dark upon us," namely, the Devil.² Browne's four sources of error have suggested to some of his critics a comparison with Bacon's four kinds of Idols,³ but if Browne had read Bacon, it must have been superficially. He was not fitted to understand the plodding method of his predecessor, and Bacon would have spurned as puerile Browne's solemn refutation of fabulous natural history. In intellect and temper the two men were opposite: Bacon, dogmatic, affirmative, systematic, confident of human progress by means of scientific

¹Pepys, Samuel, Diary. Jan. 27, 1664. ed. Globe, p. 241.

²Browne, Sir Thomas, Works, ed. Sayle, London (1904). I, 182.

³For instance, More, P.E., Shelburne Essays, Sixth Series, N.Y. (1909). p. 163.

knowledge, always concerned with practical achievement; Browne, on the contrary, questioning, hesitating, possessed of a profound intellectual humility, an obscure reader of old folios who nourished his emotions and imagination chiefly upon the wonder and mystery of this world and the invisible which transcends it, whose thirty years of commonplace life seemed to him nothing less than a miracle.

Browne was in fact not related intellectually to Bacon but to Montaigne. It is not in the superficial criticism of superstitions in the Pseudodoxia Epidemica, but in the more profound scepticism of Religio Medici that we find the real Browne, and this scepticism, like Browne's informal manner, he owed partly to the Essays.¹ He had the easy tolerance, the distrust of reasoning, the sense of the fluidity of opinion, which characterized the author of the Apologie de Raimond Sebond. He is content with his own religion, and content to let others retain theirs. "I could never divide myself from any man upon the difference of an opinion, or be angry with his judgment for not agreeing with me in that from which perhaps within a few days I should dissent myself."² One is reminded of Montaigne's description of his own nature as divers et ondoyant. Disputes and arguments, Browne thought, are no more reliable than pitched battles in settling doubtful points. "A man may be in as just possession of Truth as of a City, and yet be forced to surrender; 'tis therefore far better to enjoy her with peace than to hazard her on a battle."³ This unheroic attitude was due not to timidity, but to a conviction that truth had little to do with

¹Cf. Texte, Joseph, La Descendance de Montaigne in Études de Littérature Européenne, Paris, (1898). pp. 51-93.

²Browne, ed. cit. I, 12.

³Ibid. I, 12.

reason. He would have agreed with Pascal that doubt is the truest philosophy.

"We do but learn to-day, what our better advanced judgements will unteach to-morrow; and Aristotle doth but instruct us, as Plato did him; that is, to confute himself. I have run through all sorts, yet find no rest in any: though our first studies and junior endeavours may style us Peripateticks, Stoicks, or Academicks, yet I perceive the wisest heads prove, at last, almost all Scepticks, and stand like Janus in the field of knowledge."¹

Our life is bounded on every side by the unknowable. The wisest understandings are tormented by unanswerable doubts,² and we are unable to know one another, nay even ourselves. "No man can justly censure or condemn another, because indeed no man truly knows another. This I perceive in myself; for I am in the dark to all the world and my nearest friends behold me but in a cloud." "Our ends are as obscure as our beginnings; the line of our days is drawn by night, and the various effects therein by a pencil that is invisible."³

But as the Greek Sceptics had taught that custom and tradition is the safest guide, as Montaigne and Pascal used scepticism as a defense of their Catholic faith, so Browne disciplines and humiliates his insubordinate reason by means of a thorough Pyrrhonism, but only that Faith may rise triumphant. Within his own nature he observes a constant feud between passion, reason and faith. "As the Propositions of Faith seem absurd unto Reason, so the Theorems of Reason unto Passion, and both unto Faith." Reason

¹Ibid. I, 99.

²Ibid. I, 66.

³Ibid. I, 91, 62.

is constantly raising objections, demanding explanations: perhaps the combustion of Gomorrah was due to "an asphaltic and bituminous nature" of the lake; manna is now plentiful in Calabria, and where then was the miracle of the days of Moses? But these attempts to rationalize our knowledge, by seducing our reason, weaken our faith. It is better to remain in our ignorance and believe, than to strive for that knowledge which makes belief unnecessary. "The Devil played at Chess with me, and yielding a Pawn, thought to gain a Queen of me, taking advantage of my honest endeavours; and whilst I laboured to raise the structure of my Reason, he strived to undermine the edifice of my Faith."¹ Browne countered his artful adversary; he undermined his own reason, so that he might raise freely the structure of his faith.

"Since I was of understanding to know we knew nothing," he says, "my reason hath been more pliable to the will of Faith; I am now content to understand a mystery without a rigid definition, in an easie and Platonick description. That allegorical description of Hermes, pleaseth me beyond all the Metaphysical definitions of Divines; where I cannot satisfie my reason, I love to humour my fancy . . . Where there is an obscurity too deep for our Reason, 'tis good to sit down with a description, periphrasis, or adumbration; for by acquainting our Reason how unable it is to display the visible and obvious effects of nature, it becomes more humble and submissive unto the subtleties of Faith; and thus I teach my haggard and unreclaimed reason to stoop unto the lure of Faith . . . And this I think is no vulgar part of Faith, to believe a thing not only above, but contrary to Reason, and against the Arguments of our proper Senses."²

In this state of mind, faith becomes easy, it surmounts every difficulty. "Methinks there be not impossibilities enough in Religion

¹Ibid. I, 31-2.

²Ibid. I, 17-18.

for an active faith . . . I love to lose my self in a mystery, to pursue my Reason to an O altitudo!" Scornfully Browne says that "'tis an easy and necessary belief to credit what our eye and sense hath examined."¹

If we ask at how many points this paradoxical thought of Browne touched upon his age, the answer is not simple. His scepticism is of course of the lineage of Sextus Empiricus and Montaigne. Montaigne also defended Pyrrhonism as an induction into religious faith, and Pascal was soon to do the same thing more powerfully and more sincerely. Thus the essential elements of Browne's thought were connected, by means of all those obscure origins, sympathies, interrelations and parallelisms which have marked European movements since the Renaissance, with Pascal and the Jansenists as well as with some of the religious poets of England. The apparent spontaneity of similar developments in England and France, neither one aware of the other, is a proof of their historical necessity and inevitableness. Human nature makes its philosophies as its poetry, to satisfy its needs.

But although Browne came so close to the central problem of his century, he failed to become one of its great thinkers. It seems to me misleading to say of him that his significance "lies in the fact that he was at once by intellect a force in the forward movement and by temperament a reactionary."² His intellect lacked independence, keenness, accuracy and critical poise. It is difficult to distinguish from his temperament, so completely is it led, turned, directed into devious ways by the demands of his imagination

¹Ibid. I, 16-17.

²More, P. E., op. cit. p. 161.

and emotion. This is why Browne is no longer read for his insight and wisdom, as Pascal is, but only for the charming naivete of his genial self-revelation, the splendor and even sublimity of his imagination, and the quaint beauty of his style. He is for us pre-eminently a humourist, in the older sense of the word.

If Browne was not forward-looking in intellect, it was not because he misunderstood the spirit of his century. In an interesting passage in his Christian Morals he refers to the enlightenment of his time.

"Let thy Studies," he writes, "be free as thy Thoughts and Contemplations: but fly not only upon the wings of Imagination; Joyn Sense unto Reason, and Experiment unto Speculation, and so give life unto Embryon Truths, and Verities yet in their Chaos. There is nothing more acceptable unto the Ingenious World, than this noble Eluctation of Truth; wherein, against the tenacity of Prejudice and Prescription, this Century now prevailleth. What Libraries of new Volumes aftertimes will behold, and in what a new World of Knowledge the eyes of our posterity may be happy, a few Ages may joyfully declare."¹

But his own studies flew upon the wings of the imagination, and his haggard and unreclaimed reason followed in servility. He passed lightly and easily from conjecture to conjecture, arriving at his conclusion merely by the aid of a "surely" or a "no doubt." When he had observed how generally the ancients planted their gardens in the pattern of the quincunx, he had a great desire to pursue the antiquity of this mystical design to its origin, perhaps in the first Paradise. Observe the successive stages of his argument:

"That the first Plantations not long after the Floud were disposed after this manner, the generality

¹Browne, ed. cit. III, 470.

and antiquity of this order observed in Vineyards, and Wine Plantations, affordeth some conjecture. And since from judicious enquiry, Saturn who divided the world between his three sonnes, who beareth a Sickle in his hand, who taught the Plantations of Vines, the setting, grafting of trees, and the best part of Agriculture, is discovered to be Noah, whether this early dispersed Husbandry in Vineyards, had not its Original in that Patriarch, is no such Paralogical doubt.

"And if it were clear that this was used by Noah after the Floud, I could easily beleieve it was in use before it; Not willing to fix such ancient inventions no higher original then Noah; Nor readily conceiving those aged Heroes, whose diet was vegetable, and only, or chiefly consisted in the fruits of the earth, were much deficient in their splendid cultivations; or after the experience of fifteen hundred years, left much for future discovery in Botanical Agriculture."¹

Such scholarship was whimsical even in the seventeenth century, the age of Casaubon and Selden. And in philosophy and divinity as well, Browne's intellect but served his predilections. His belief in immortality, he said, had been "instructed" by the "smattering I have of the Philosophers Stone" and by "those strange and mystical transmigrations that I have observed in Silk-worms."² He believed in the resurrection because without a belief in a future life he was unable to withstand temptation.³ His way of thinking was that ancient one which in our time has been given the name Pragmatic: truths were such proposition as he found it advantageous to believe. "In Bivious Theorems and Janus-faced Doctrines," he writes in Christian Morals, "let Virtuous considerations state the determination. Look upon Opinions as thou dost upon the Moon, and chuse not

¹Ibid. III, 153-4.

²Ibid. I, 58.

³Ibid. I, 67.

the dark hemisphere for thy contemplation. Embrace not the opacous and blind side of Opinions, but that which looks most Luciferously or influentially unto Goodness."¹ From among the many illustrations of this method in his works, we may select that passage in Religio Medici, where, beginning with confessed doubt and ignorance, he is yet able to satisfy himself not only regarding the existence of spirits, but even to give a scholastic definition of their nature.

"For Spirits," he says, "I am so far from denying their existence, that I could easily believe, that not onely whole Countries, but particular persons, have their Tutelary and Guardian Angels: It is not a new opinion of the Church of Rome, but an old one of Pythagoras and Plato; there is no heresie in it; and if not manifestly defin'd in Scripture, yet is it an opinion of a good and wholesome use in the course and actions of a mans life, and would serve as an Hypothesis to salve many doubts, whereof common Philosophy affordeth no solution. Now if you demand my opinion and Metaphysicks of their natures, I confess them very shallow, most of them in a negative way, like that of God; or in a comparative, between our selves and fellow-creatures; for there is in this Universe a Stair, or manifest Scale of creatures, rising not disorderly, or in confusion, but with a comely method and proportion. . . . Having therefore no certain knowledge of their Natures, 'tis no bad method of the Schools, whatsoever perfection we find obscurely in our selves, in a more compleat and absolute way to ascribe unto them. I believe they have an extemporary knowledge, and upon the first motion of their reason do what we cannot without study or deliberation; that they know things by their forms, and define specifical difference what we describe by accidents and properties; and therefore probabilities to us may be demonstrations unto them: that they have knowledge not onely of the specifical, but numerical forms of individuals, and understand by what reserved difference each single Hypostasis (besides the relation to its species) becomes its numerical self . . . I cannot with those in that great Father securely interpret the work of the first day, Fiat lux, to the creation of Angels, though I confess there is not any

¹Ibid. III, 483.

creature that hath so neer a glympse of their nature, as light in the Sun and Elements. We stile it a bare accident, but where it subsists alone, 'tis a spiritual Substance, and may be an Angel: in brief, conceive light invisible, and that is a Spirit."¹

With his reason bound in servitude, Browne thus let his faith and imagination build him a universe to live in, a universe filled primarily with the wonderful. It was constructed to satisfy the longings, whimsicalities, even weaknesses, of the heart and soul of Browne. Without scepticism no one may enter into it, but once past the charmed portal and one must be all credulity. It is the world of the imagination, with something of the fascination and unreality of a fairy story. A strange religion, indeed, for a scientist or for any enlightened modern man! Yet we cannot question the sincerity of Browne, who lived in a credulous age, when the gravest and most thoughtful men believed not only in tutelar spirits and the resurrection, but in witches. Browne sought to keep the straight path in divinity -- he wanted to believe what his contemporaries believed. But his distinction was that he saw all things with the eyes of wonder. Glanville, who in his best passages echoes the cadence of Browne, and who was his kin in his scepticism, probably learned from him also the sense of the mystery of the world and of ourselves. If, as Donne said, all divinity is love and wonder, Browne knew half of divinity; all the world to him was wonder. But it is not so certain that he understood all that Donne meant by love. For with all his faith and imagination and charity, Browne lacked intensity in his personal life. He had no "hydroptic,

¹ Ibid. I, 48-50.

immoderate desires" after learning or wisdom; he did not risk his soul in adventure and recover it through anguish; he had never eaten his bread in tears and bitterness, and therefore, as the harper sang in Wilhelm Meister, he could not know God. Browne never had any such revealing spiritual crisis as Pascal, who knew so much better "les grandeurs et miseres de l'homme." Such intensity of feeling, a longing for the comfort of finding one's weary and broken soul precious in the sight of God, is implied in Donne's definition of divinity as love and wonder. Browne's religion was free from this strain and effort; he solved his problems by the gentle method of dreaming meditation. He played his game with the Devil and won by a paradox. And as he rose to bow adieu, he must have imagined that he saw in the features of his bewildered adversary an involuntary smile of surprise and admiration.

IV

Francis Osborn: Scepticism and the New Courtier Type

It is not surprising that a work so fascinating to the imagination as Religio Medici should be one of the most popular books of its day, but the vogue of Osborn's Advice to a Son requires explanation. It lacks the preservative quality of a style, except for some strongly flavored figures and a constant straining after aphorism. Moreover, its thought is to us platitudinous and mediocre. And yet immediately upon its publication in 1656 it gained for its author a wide reputation. It was, in fact, a succès de scandale; it was read chiefly by the younger generation, which in every age, as it emerges from youth to manhood, delights to express its inde-

pendence with a cynical turn. At Oxford the "godly ministers" detected in the book the "principles of atheism," and on July 27, 1658, the vice-chancellor, Dr. John Conant, summoned the Oxford book-sellers before him and forbade them to sell the book; but according ~~the~~ Wood, this only caused the Advice to sell the better. The sort of reputation Osborn acquired is perhaps indicated also by the dedication to him of a translation of Bernardino Ochino's A Dialogue on Polygamy, published in London, 1657, a volume which has sometimes, apparently in error, been credited to Osborn himself.¹

Osborn was a distinctly seventeenth-century type, one of the courtiers who, too emancipated to continue the tradition of the great Elizabethans, prepared by their disillusionment and scepticism for the tone of court and country during the Restoration. Born in 1593, he had spent his youth and early manhood at court, as master of the horse to William Herbert, third earl of Pembroke, and in the office of the lord treasurer's remembrancer. In the great political conflict his sympathies were with the popular party, but he took no active part in affairs. His later years were devoted primarily to the education of his son, whom the Advice was to guide to success in public life. Like the pelican, Osborn says in the preface to his son, he dissected himself, he "ripped up his own bowels," to show the defects of humanity. But, though the book is a study in frankness, it is in no sense a spiritual confession; all the revelations are merely to instruct an ingenuous young man in the difference between the exterior manner and the inner thought of an accomplished man of the world.

¹See article on Osborn, by Sidney Lee, in Dictionary of National Biography. XIV, 1179-ff.

Although there is nothing to indicate that Osborn had read De la Sagesse, his purpose and temper had much in common with Pierre Charron, whose volume had become the handbook of the Bohemian libertines of Paris. Charron, no more than Osborn, had intended his work for either Bohemians or libertines. Both writers tried to formulate the principles of a prudent worldly wisdom, the secrets of success in a polite society, the chief of which is never to be duped. The wise man will avoid being a slave to his passions, but he will also free himself from ignorance and prejudice. Charron was therefore significantly at the same time a disciple of Du Vair and Montaigne, a Stoic and a Sceptic. On his title page he inscribed two mottoes: Paix et Peu and Je ne scay. His sagesse was at heart a scepticism, "une pleine, entiere, genereuse & seigneuriale liberte d'esprit," which must, however, remain a private matter, lest it hinder one's fortune and advancement.

"Or iouyssant ainsi le sage de ce droit sien à iuger & examiner toutes choses, il aduiendra souuent que le iugement & la main, l'esprit & le corps se contrediront, qu'il fera au dehors d'une façon & iugera autrement au dedans, iouera un roellé deuant le monde, & un autre en son esprit, il le doit faire ainsi pour garder Iustice par tout . . . Il doit faire & se porter au dehors pour la reuerence publique & n'offenser personne, selon que la loy, la coustume & ceremonie du pays porte & requiert: Et au dedans iuger au vray ce qui en est, selon la raison universelle, selon laquelle souuent il aduiendra qu'il condamnera ce qu'au dehors il fait."¹

Osborn, likewise, wants his son to preserve this lordly freedom of mind, but not thereby to prejudice his career. Writing in the time of the Commonwealth, he declares that "it is observable in the

¹Charron, De la Sagesse, Book II, Chap.ii. ed.Paris(1646). pp.326-7.

present humour that those who carry an Impress of the wildest errours, have a safer Pass-port to travel by, and a nearer step to Preferment than such as retain the Tenets our Fathers kept in gross during the flames of the ancient Persecutions." In this period of confusion, he says, "in these Aporetick times," he is unable to give "better counsel, than to keep your compliance so loose, as, if possible, you may fix it to the best advantage of your profit and honour." He would, however, caution against zeal, which was just then in such high estimation; for, he says, it is

"not likely to hold longer in tune, than a Harmony can be made among all Parties, now possibly at odds, or under a jealous aspect: Therefore I advise you to put no more of it on, than with decency you may devest, in case the fashion should alter, and the rich die the Wars have dipped it in, be rubbed off; since all customs rise or fall proportionable to the exchange they make for the Preferments in the State; to which in discretion you are bound to suit your Obedience, though not your Conscience."¹

Manners, good breeding, the art of success, these are the subjects of Osborn's Advice. And Osborn was not thinking of an ideal world, but of the court in which he had lived. He laid bare its sordid aspects without any word of censure, merely appraising the conditions of getting on in it. His remarks betray everywhere a cynical hardness and outspoken selfishness which a Sidney or a Spenser would have considered the marks of the lowest breeding. "Gallop not through a Town, for fear of hurting your self or others: Besides the undecency of it . . . Swimming may save a man, in case of necessity; though it loseth many, when practised in wantonness, by increasing their confidence; Therefore, for Pleasure exceed not your

¹Osborn, Francis, Works, 8th ed., London (1682). pp. 87-8.

depth; and in seeking to save another, beware of drowning your self."¹ Sometimes he spices an epigram with vulgarity. "To make love to married women doth not only multiply the Sin, but the danger . . . Fly, with Joseph, the Embraces of great Ladies; lest you lose your liberty, and see your legs rot in the stocks of the Physician."² Even where he appears most generous, he brings himself up sharply with a qualification dictated by prudent selfishness. "Despise none," he says, "for meanness of Blood, yet do not ordinarily make them your Companions, for debasing your own; unless you find them clarified by excellent Parts, or gilded by Fortune or Power."³ Osborn studied the art of living in much the same spirit as Machiavelli studied politics. He was, indeed, one of the earliest apologists for Machiavelli. In a brief Discourse he says that, though Machiavelli deserves some of the blame laid upon him, yet,

"considering he was not only an Italian but a Courtier, few can do less than admire his bad fortune to see one man inherit, in particular the mass of Reproaches due to all Princes and Statesmen in general . . . A Body Politick is like that of a Man, which when it is altogether, shews outwardly a beautiful and comely sight; but search into the Entrails from whence the true Nourishment proceeds, and little is to be found but Blood, Filth and Stench: The truth is, Machiavel is observed to have raked deeper in this, than his Predecessors, which makes him smell, as he doth, in the nostrils of the nice and ignorant; whereas those of more Prudence and Experience, know it is the most natural savour of the Court."⁴

Like the Florentine, Osborn had more respect for facts than for ideals; and his acquaintance with the motives of men had blunted his

¹Ibid. p. 12.
²Ibid. p. 24.
³Ibid. p. 64.
⁴Ibid. pp. 291, 301-2.

moral sense.

No doubt the young bloods at Oxford read with special interest Osborn's outspoken and vulgar cynicism regarding women and marriage. Osborn was here the inheritor of the libertine thought of the Renaissance, the naturalism of Montaigne and of Donne's early verse. He, also, believed that marriage is an unnatural institution, imposed only by custom, and enforced by the false sanctimoniousness of the church.

"Love, like a Burning-glass, contracts the dilated lines of Lust, and fixeth them upon one object; bestowed by our fellow Creatures, (the exacter Observers of the Dictates of Nature) promiscuously, without partiality in affection, on every distinct Female of their respective species; whereas Man, being restrained to a particular Choice, by the severity of Law, Custom and his own more stupendous Folly . . . is hurried away with the first apparition of an imaginary Beauty . . . It may be strongly presumed, that the hand of Policy (which first or last brings all things, expedient to humane society, under the imperious notion of Religion) hung this padlock upon the liberty of men, and after Custom had lost the Key, the Church, according to her wonted Subtilty, took upon her to protect it; delivering in her Charge to the people, that single wedlock was by divine right, making the contrary, in diverse places, Death, and where she proceeded with the greatest moderation, Excommunication: condemning thereby (besides four fifths parts of the world) the holy Patriarchs, who among their so frequent Dialogues held with their Maker, were never reproved for multiplying Wives and Concubines; reckoned to David as a Blessing, and to Solomon for a mark of Magnificence."¹

As to religion, Osborn's advice is ambiguous; for the future of religious parties in England was not entirely clear, and Osborn was in religious matters strictly opportunist. He desired his son above all things to be prudent. An outward conformity he com-

¹ Ibid. pp. 27-32. Cf. above, Chapter III, pp. 111-ff.

mended, as we have seen. When travelling abroad, he says, "let not the Irreligion of any Place breed in you a neglect of Divine Duties." But he would not have his son take his religious tenets too seriously, and defend them against all contenders.

"Shun all Disputes," he advises, "but concerning Religion especially; because that which commands in chief, though false and erroneous, will, like a Cock on's own dunghill, line her Arguments with force, and drive the Stranger out of the Pit with insignificant clamours. All Opinions, not made natural by complexion, or imperious Education, being equally ridiculous to those of contrary Tenets."¹

Osborn had no desire that his son should entertain ambitions of an intellectual career; he advised taking truth, like women, lightly. The wisdom of a courtier consists in a compliance with whatever element is in power, in being a hanger-on rather than a leader. Therefore make no enemies who can injure you; conciliate any one who can aid you; make such profitable alliances as you can, and have the prudence to keep your own opinions to yourself.

"Denounce no enmity against the Clergy," he says, "for supported by Prayers or Policy, they cannot long want an opportunity to revenge themselves. Neither oppose any Religion you find established, how ridiculous soever you apprehend it; For though like David, you may bring unavoidable Arguments to stagger a popular error. None but the monsters own Sword, can cut off the head of one universally received."²

Osborn was himself a man of the enlightenment, a rationalist. "In this wilderness of contention," he says, "we have no better guide to follow than Reason, found the same for many thousands of years, though Belief hath been observed to vary every Age." He thought the

¹Ibid. pp. 45-6.

²Ibid. pp. 97-8.

Socinians were "the most Chymical and Rational part of our many Divisions." But these were mental reservations only; prudence dictates an outward agreement with whatever faction happens to be in authority. "For he that herds with the Congregation, though in an Errour, hath Obedience to stand by him, whereas a Truth in the other may be rendred more peccant through a solitary obstinacy."¹

Such was Osborn, author of one of the three most popular books of the Restoration. To readers who might pick up his Advice without considering its relation to its age, this popularity would be difficult to comprehend. The petty time-serving of Osborn is too unpleasantly obvious; he appears a man without either intellectual or moral character. He sneers at the world, but yields to it weakly and hypocritically, and is chiefly concerned with getting himself on in it. He is a disillusioned man, grasping at the satisfaction of wordly success. But his popularity is to be explained by this very fact, that in his time many young men were being disillusioned in the same manner as Osborn, that they cultivated disillusionment, but yet desired to be well-manner gentlemen, competent to make their way in a sophisticated society. He appealed to the new courtier type of the seventeenth century, who had laid aside Plato, Plutarch, Aristotle and Seneca, for Montaigne, Lucretius and the ancient and modern satirists. Osborn was not great enough to be original; he represents a large class who did not take philosophy very seriously, and whose scepticism is manifested chiefly in their cynical attitude towards ideals of morality and conduct. Osborn is of unique value to the student of seventeenth century thought and

¹Ibid. pp. 92, 85, 83.

manners precisely because he reflects so well the tone of the court under the first Stuarts, in which men were rapidly emancipated from everything but wit, adaptable manners, and a skill in turning to one's own account the weaknesses of others.

These brief studies of Osborn and other men representative of seventeenth century thought serve to emphasize one of the most important distinctions between the seventeenth and the sixteenth centuries: the scepticism which in the sixteenth century had been cultivated only by groups or almost isolated individuals, and at the danger of social ostracism, even of death, such scepticism was in the seventeenth century widely diffused in English society. The Latitudinarians were sufficiently sceptical to deny the possibility of intellectual unity in the Church. In Thomas Browne, a man bred in the scientific thought of the late Renaissance, scepticism became for the moment all powerful and reduced to ruins the constructions of presumptuous reason. Francis Osborn, the new type of courtly gentleman, was more concerned with manners than with either intellect or character; but scepticism is everywhere in solution in his work, and, although like a gentleman he disdained to be either a scholar or a philosopher, he was indubitably of the tribe of Montaigne. Thus in various ways, and colored by various personalities, the critical and sceptical temper of the century was manifested. Except for the principle of toleration, perhaps, nothing new, nothing of any philosophical value was added by the men we have considered to the sceptical thought of the Renaissance; but they show how rapidly and how completely the disintegrating forces of Renaissance thought had permeated the society of the seventeenth century and affected its intellectual and moral tone.

Numerous other names might of course have been included in this chapter; but the aim has not been completeness, but a selection of representative men, especially such as were influential after their own day. I have tried to present, not only the sceptical element in early seventeenth century thought, but also some suggestions as to the continuity of this element from the Renaissance to the end of the seventeenth century. With this general account as a background, I shall give more special treatment to two important developments from Renaissance scepticism: the rise of Deism and the sceptical thought of some of the English religious poets.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SCEPTICISM AND THE ORIGINS OF DEISM

I. Two Tendencies in Deism.- II. The Development of Deism among Renaissance Sceptics.- III. Deism Dissolved in Complete Scepticism.

The well-known story related by Lord Herbert of Cherbury, that he printed his book De Veritate only after receiving a sign from heaven, may perhaps be taken also symbolically, as signifying that he felt the time was ripe for printed circulation of ideas which, as he himself said, were so "different from any thing which had been written heretofore." Though his book had received the commendation of so great a man as Grotius, "yet as I knew it would meet with much opposition, I did consider whether it was not better for me a while to suppress it."¹ The sign, however, was vouchsafed him, and for the first time, an avowed Deistic treatise appeared in print.

But though Herbert escaped the persecution which his book undoubtedly would have drawn upon him a quarter or half a century earlier, the time proved not yet ripe for any widespread Deistic movement in England. The Arianism of the sixteenth century had done much to prepare for it, but we must distinguish between this Arianism, which admitted the Bible as inspired revelation, and Deism, which based religion immediately on the reason of man.² The

¹The Autobiography of Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, ed. Lee, Sidney, wnd ed., London (n.d.). p. 133.

²The Arianism of the sixteenth century has been discussed above, Chapter II.

real predecessors of Herbert we shall find on the Continent, among the obscure, suppressed developments of the Renaissance. But Deism as a force in English thought belongs to the later seventeenth and earlier eighteenth centuries. The discussion of it and its Renaissance origins has therefore been postponed to this latter part of our study.

I

Two Tendencies in Deism

In a study of the connection between scepticism and the origin of the Deistic movement, one may consider Deism in two aspects. In the first place, Deism involved a criticism of the special beliefs of every religious faith, whether Christianity or Judaism or Mohammedanism. The Deists were adepts, considering the state of scholarship of that time, in higher criticism. They aimed to destroy what they thought the falsifications of essential religion. But though they showed themselves sceptical towards the historical religions, they had at first also a different aim very closely at heart, to purify universal religion from the corruptions of organizations and priesthoods. True religion, they all held, is natural religion, universally revealed to all men and sufficient unto them for salvation. Religion was in this way based on universal reason, and we may therefore characterize Deism as a religious rationalism.

Scepticism regarding the peculiar tenets of Christianity and a rationalistic affirmation of a universal religion are observ-

able already in the so-called founder of English Deism, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, though his criticism of Christianity was rather unmistakably implied than definitely expressed. In his De Veritate, published in Paris, 1624, a remarkable critique of the method of knowledge leads to a statement of five common notions, notitiae communes, which constitute a criterion of truth in religion.¹ These five propositions, which he considered undeniable, which all mankind must needs acknowledge by unaided reason, were:

1. That there is one supreme God.
2. That he ought to be worshipped.
3. That virtue and piety are the chief parts of divine worship.
4. That we ought to be sorry for our sins and repent of them.
5. That Divine Goodness dispenses rewards and punishments both in this life and after it.²

The De Veritate established these propositions on a philosophical basis; the De Religione Gentilium, published in Amsterdam, 1663, after Herbert's death, attempts to show that they were present in the pagan religions of Greece and Rome, but that they had been obscured by the superstitions fostered by the priesthood. Herbert here often betrays an animus against the clerical profession which must have had a nearer object than the Greek and Roman priests of whom he is apparently speaking.

"When the Heathens," he says, "had receiv'd the Notion of the Attributes of the Supream GOD mention'd before, there sprung up a Race of Crafty Priests, who not thinking it sufficient there

¹Herbert, De Veritate, London (1645). p. 222: "Hae autem sunt omnino Notitiae Communes, ex quibus vera Ecclesia Catholica sive universalis constat."

²Ibid. pp. 208-222.

should be but one GOD in all this Universe, judg'd it would conduce much to their Interest, to join and associate some others to this Supream Deity; and that it would be no obstacle, but that the one Most Good and Great GOD should have the Pre-eminence over all others. Their Design of Introducing other Gods, drove farther: they thought they could embarrass the Minds of the People more with the Notion of Plurality of Deities, than by the Worship of One only, tho' never so Great; especially after they had invented and dispersed a different way of Worship for each of them. They also expected to reap more Profit, and have larger Stipends from the various Rites, Ceremonies and Sacred Mysteries which they contriv'd and divulg'd than if Men of all Ages should continue to perform the same Duties of Piety and Virtue."¹

But, though obscured, these five principles have remained a part of all religions, and we must suppose that Herbert considered them the only true tenets in Christianity as well as in other cults. Certainly there is nothing in his language to prevent this application. For, he says,

"tho' Thousands of Errors should be heaped upon their Basis; the Reason of Divine Worship is so supported by these five Columns joined together, that no Height whatever that is built upon them, will be able to damage or endanger the Building. These therefore are those Firmaments of Universal Divine Providence and pure Religion, which never were or ever can be concealed from any Age or Country; therefore whatever was Promulgated by the Priest formerly in unintelligible Words, mysterious Fables, fictitious Revelations, and ambiguous Rites and Ceremonies, imposed upon the credulous People and had but a sandy Foundation. The greatest Men in all Parts of the World could never add any thing to these five Articles, which could more promote that true Virtue, (which makes Men like God and renders them fit for his Society) or Piety, Purity and Sanctity of Life."²

¹Herbert, The Antient Religion of the Gentiles, English translation, London (1705). p. 271.

²Ibid. pp. 354-5.

Herbert therefore presents both the sceptical and the rationalistic aspects of Deism. He also shared the aim which, as we shall see, motivated the earlier Deists before him, of rescuing true religion from the scepticism which did not distinguish between essentials and superstitions. Having discussed the harmful effects of the additions of the priests to the five fundamental propositions, he says: "But what is still worse, by this Means the Parts of true Religion being abdicated or rejected, Men for the most part became Atheists, and Contemners of Divine Justice and Providence; or if they did embrace the whole of Religion with those Superstitions which attended it, they imposed upon themselves and that internal Court within them, and deserted Right Reason, which is the best Rule of Life."¹ Herbert tried to avoid the errors in each direction and restore to religion the integrity and purity of its pristine state.

Deism, which to its contemporary opponents seemed itself to be the essence of scepticism, was therefore yet an attempt to check extreme scepticism, and its origin must be sought in connection with the sceptical thought of the later Middle Ages and Renaissance. This origin, I believe, will contribute to the explanation of the peculiar nature of Deism, its general tendency, and its dissolution in the eighteenth century.²

¹Ibid. p. 355.

²Inasmuch as the existence of Deists in the sixteenth century has been well known ever since Bayle and Leland, it seems strange that so little has been said about the predecessors of Lord Herbert of Cherbury. Höffding, in his History of Modern Philosophy, I, 59-68, discusses Bodin as well as Herbert, but does not notice any earlier development. Dilthey, in his Weltanschauung und Analyse des Menschen seit Renaissance und Reformation, Leipzig (1914), pp.45-ff., discusses a somewhat wider conception which he calls "der religiös universal-istischen Theismus," that is, "die Überzeugung, dass die Gottheit in

II

The Development of Deism among Renaissance Sceptics

Already in the thirteenth century, with the new contact with Mohammedanism and Arabian culture, a spirit of tolerance towards non-Christian religions began to manifest itself. As we have seen,¹ Crispin and Abelard wrote dialogues in which the various religions were represented fairly and in a conciliatory spirit, even though the intention of the compositions was manifestly Christian. We have seen also that Aquinas himself wrote a treatise on religion in the light of reason, expressly for the benefit of those who did not admit, to begin with, the truth of Christian revelation.² Out of the problem of religious truth which was thus raised in a new form for Christian Europe in the thirteenth century, developed a new comparative study of religions, for which Christianity, Judaism and Mohammedanism were equally divine in what they had in common, and equally false in their peculiarities. The gradual broadening of sympathy was most strikingly shown in the change which came over the celebrated Tale of the Three Rings. In the Renaissance the critical discussion of Christian doctrines was often hidden in ambiguous dialogues, in which the characters were allowed full freedom of

den verschiedenen Religionen und Philosophen gleichesweise wirksam gewesen sei und noch heute wirke." He names Erasmus and Reuchlin among the adherents of this Theism. I think the Deists must be distinguished from these milder "Theists" as more sceptical in their rejection of the peculiar tenets of Christianity, Islamism, or any other historical religion, and also as more rationalistic, in their insistence on the universal revelation and self-evident truth of natural religion.

¹In Chapter I, pp. 45-ff.

²See above, p. 39.

thought and sometimes licence of expression. But although these attacks on the Bible or the church resorted to ridicule or even blasphemy, they were directed only against what their authors considered the corruptions of Christianity and the other creeds. Religion in its pure and primitive and universal form, as it is constantly being revealed to the universal reason of mankind in all ages and lands, such religion the sceptical treatises of the Renaissance sought to affirm. Their criticism of Christianity was intended to help purify it into this universal and rational religion.

In the enlightenment of the earlier Renaissance, before the fierce conflicts of the Reformation brought more rigid discipline into intellectual and ecclesiastical ranks, there was observable a tolerant and liberal spirit among intelligent men. In England Sir Thomas More championed freedom and sweetness and light, and in his island of Utopia the religion of "the most and wisest part" of the people was apparently a form of Deism. They believed, he said "that there is a certayne godlie powre unknowen, everlastinge, incomprehensible, inexplicable, farre above the capacitie and retche of mans witte, dispersed throughoute all the worlde, not in bignes, but in vertue and power. Him they call the father of al. To him alone they attribute the beginninges, the encreasinges, the procedinges, the chaunges and the endes of al thinges."¹ Though the tolerance of the island permitted a great variety of religious beliefs to spring up, yet, "they all begyn by litle and litle to forsake and fall from this varietie of superstitions, and to agre together in that religion whiche semethe by reason to passe and excell the residewe."² In the

¹More, *Utopia*, ed. Lumby, Cambridge (1913). p. 144.

²Ibid. p. 144.

imaginary dialogue between Lupset and Cardinal Pole, discussed in an earlier chapter,¹ Thomas Starkey, a contemporary of More, makes the learned and pious Lupset present a Deistic conception of religion as based explicitly on the Stoic notion of the Law of Nature.

"In so much," Lupset is made to say, "that the Jue, Sarasyn, Turke, and More, so long as they obserue theyr cyuyle ordynance and statutys, deuysyd by theyr old fatherys in euery secte, dyrectyng them to the law of nature; so long, I say, ther be men wych ernystely affyrme them to lyue wel, and euery one in hys secte to be sauyd, and non to perysch utturly; seying the infynyte gudnes of God hathe no les made them aftur hys owne ymage and forme, then he hath made the Chrystun man; and the most parte of them neuer, perauentur, hard of the law of Chryst. Wherfor, so long as they lyue aftur the law of nature, obseruyng also theyr cyuyle ordynance, as mean to bryng them to the end of the same, they schal not be damnyd. Thys I haue hard the opynyon of grete wyse men, wel ponderyng the gudnes of God and of nature; but whether hyt be so or not, let us, aftur the mynd of Sayn Poule, leue thys to the secrete iugement of God."²

But Deistical tendencies are not Deism, though they helped to prepare for it. For its origin we must look to Italy, where the court of Frederick II had early fostered liberalism and unbelief, where the Tale of the Three Rings had undoubtedly received its Deistic transformation, and where Pomponatius soon after 1500 cast the horoscope of Christianity and presaged its early decline and dissolution.³ From Italy in the middle of the sixteenth century came the immensely influential Socinians, whose Unitarian leanings for a century and a half troubled the orthodox of northern Europe. And from Italy, according to the contemporary Swiss, Viret, came a

¹See above, pp. 125-ff.

²England in the Reign of King Henry the Eighth, ed. Cowper, E.T.S., London (1878). pp. 19-20.

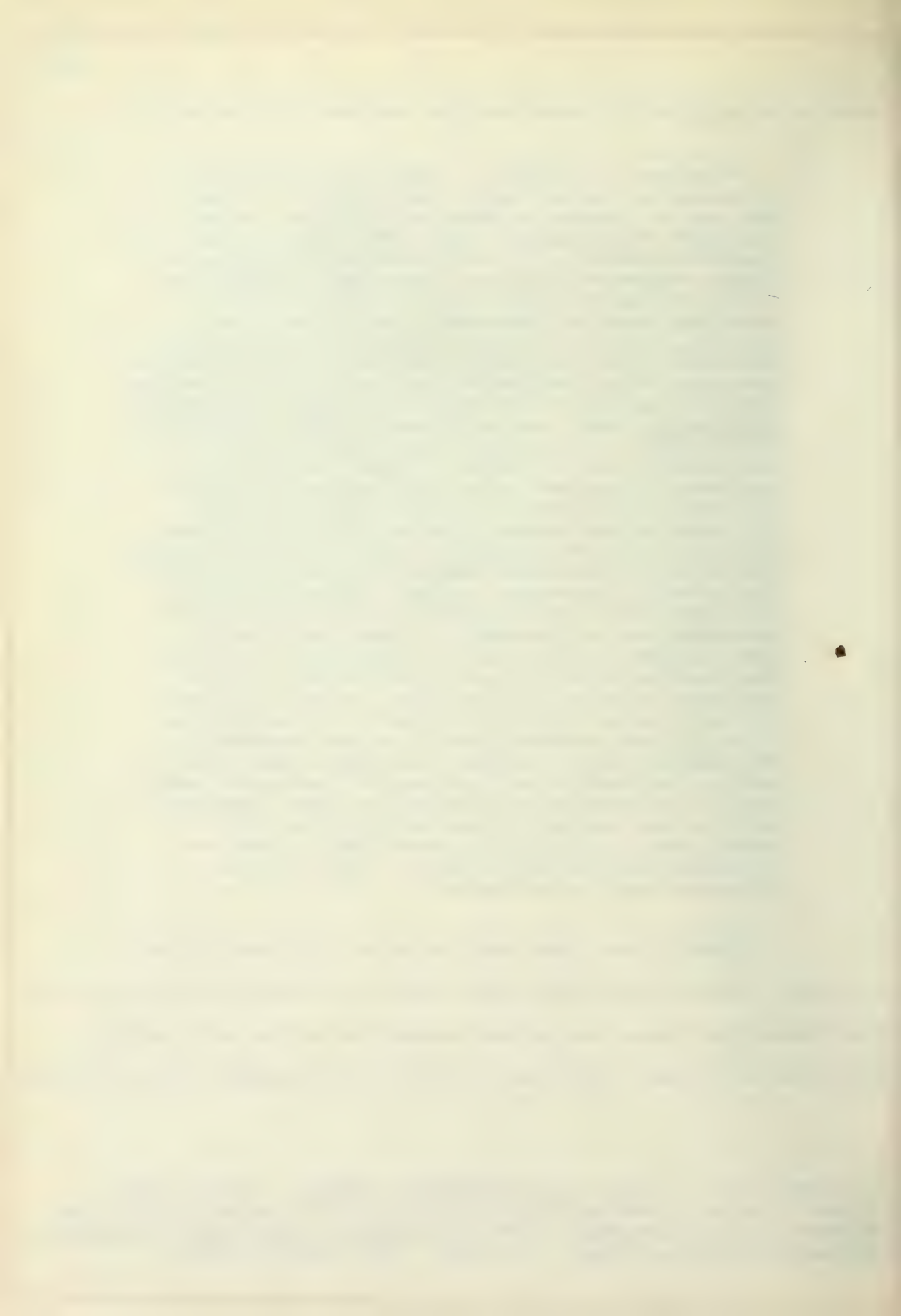
³Douglas, A.H., Pietro Pomponazzi, Cambridge (1910). pp. 300-ff.

sect which applied to themselves the new name of "Deists."

"The name of Deists," says the first English historian of the movement, "as applied to those who are no friends to revealed religion, is said to have been first assumed about the middle of the sixteenth century, by some Gentlemen in France and Italy, who were willing to cover their opposition to the Christian revelation by a more honourable name than that of Atheists. One of the first authors, as far as I can find, that makes express mention of them is Viret, a divine of great eminence among the first Reformers; who in the epistle dedicatory prefixed to the second tome of his Instruction Chrétienne, which was published in 1563, speaks of some persons in that time who called themselves by a new name, that of Deists. These, he tells us, professed to believe a God, but shewed no regard to Jesus Christ, and considered the doctrine of the apostles and evangelists as fables and dreams. He adds, that they laugh'd at all religion, notwithstanding they conformed themselves, with regard to the outward appearance, to the religion of those with whom they were obliged to live, or whom they were desirous of pleasing, or whom they feared. Some of them, as he observes, professed to believe the immortality of the soul; others were of the Epicurean opinion in this point, as well as about the providence of God with respect to mankind, as if he did not concern himself in the government of human affairs. He adds, that many among them set up for learning and philosophy, and were looked upon to be persons of an acute and subtil genius; and that not content to perish alone in their error, they took pains to spread the poison, and to infect and corrupt others by their impious discourses and bad examples."¹

Although the widespread Arianism in Europe in the sixteenth century must often have been in fact Deistic, yet it is of importance that those who called themselves Deists were seeking religion in its most universal form and distinguished themselves from

¹Leland, John, A View of the Deistical Writers, London (1754). I, 2-3. Leland gives Bayle's dictionary as his authority for the account in this paragraph. See Dictionnaire Historique et Critique, 5th ed., Amsterdam (1740). IV, 452. Sub Viret, note D.



Christians. Viret has left us an account of them from the point of view of the opposition. But we have other more sympathetic contemporary accounts of the temper and doctrines of the sixteenth century Deists, in the famous dialogue by Jean Bodin and in a hitherto neglected anonymous treatise.

Bodin's Heptaplomeres has been discussed by several writers in the last century, and its contents are well known.¹ The seven characters of the dialogue represent seven distinct types of religious thought known to Bodin: Roman Catholicism, Zwinglianism, Lutheranism, Mohammedanism, Islamism, Deism and sceptical naturalism. The examination of the doctrines of Christianity from various points of view is free and even at times irreverent, exempting nothing from argument or ridicule. At the conclusion every disputant leaves with his ideas unchanged, and the author of the dialogue expresses no preference for the opinions of any one of his characters. Yet it seems clear, both from the conduct and spirit of the discussion, as well as from a comparison with Bodin's other works, that the Deist comes nearer than any other to the real opinions of the author.² However that may be, the Deist, though he is not so called, is here a Renaissance type drawn by a contemporary. He contends for natural religion. "Si la véritable religion est la naturelle," he says, "laquelle se fait assez connaître d'elle-même, qu'est-il besoin de Jupiter, de Christ, de Mahomet, et de se feindre des dieux qui ont été mortels comme nous?"³ His ideas are thus summarized by

¹It was edited from manuscript by G.E.Guhrauer, Das Heptaplomeres des Jean Bodin, Berlin (1841). See also Baudrillart, Henri, J. Bodin et son Temps, Paris (1853); F. v. Bezold, Jean Bodins Heptaplomeres und der Atheismus des 16. Jahrhunderts, in Historische Zeitschrift, vols. 113-114; Höffding, op. cit. I, 59-63.

²Baudrillart, op. cit. p.200.

³Ibid. p.200.

Baudrillart:

"Le salut de tous ceux qui ont cru en un Dieu unique, spirituel, qui l'ont adoré en esprit et en vérité, qui ont vécu conformément à la morale naturelle, laquelle enseigne le bien et la justice, le salut et la béatitude de ces hommes, qu'ils soient d'ailleurs des sages de l'antiquité, ou des patriarches de la Bible, ou des sectateurs des diverses religions, voilà la thèse favorite de Toralba; il aime à y revenir, à s'y étendre avec un accent de conviction."¹

More conclusive than Bodin's dialogue is a treatise published in 1836 from a sixteenth century manuscript, and since neglected and apparently forgotten.² The complexion of this anonymous work is indicated somewhat by the fact that in the same manuscript with it was a copy of the Liber de Tribus Impostoribus. It consists of four parts, of which the first, third and fourth are a criticism of Christian doctrines and Biblical history. The second part, under the caption Vera, divina, antiquissima et perfectissima doctrina de Deo et voluntate eius, is a systematic statement of the Deistic creed. The first paragraph, with its definition of God as Creator or First Cause, and its somewhat utilitarian estimate of the value of God for man, gives us at once the atmosphere of the later period of the enlightenment:

"Cum coelum, maximum et splendidissimum hoc opus, contemplamur, praeterea solem, lunam et stellas, quae in coelo sunt, et consideramus, quam pulcherrimo, certissimo et constanti ordine et motu moveantur: oportet nos fateri, esse aliquid et quidem optimum,

¹Ibid. p. 212.

²Origo et fundamenta religionis Christianae, ed. Gfrorer, August. Zeitschrift für die historische Theologie, Leipzig (1836). VI, 180-259. I am indebted to Dr. Joseph W. Swain for calling my attention to this treatise.

potentissimum et sapientissimum, quod tanta et tam splendida opera condidit, eaque in tam pulcherrimo, certo et constanti ordine et motu conservat, id quod Deum appellamus.

"Deinde cum consideramus, ad cuius utilitatem et usum mundus et quaecunque sunt in mundo condita sint, reperimus, propter hominem omnia condita esse," etc.¹

Such a God is knowable by unaided reason; all his essential attributes are demonstrable.

"Id docet nos ratio," so the author summarizes his own argument, "Deum esse essentiam infinitam, aeternam, optimam, potentissimam, sapientissimam et iustissimam, quae non tantum omnia creavit, sed eadem etiam nunc sustentat, regit et conservat, atque adeo etiam cogitationes omnium hominum novit, qui bona et iusta amat et praemiis ornat, iniusta vero aversatur et punit."²

As the attributes of God are discoverable in nature, so the moral law is identical with the universal and rational Law of Nature, the Stoic conception which exercised such a profound and powerful influence on Renaissance thought. "Nos natura et ratio docet, quid et qualis sit Deus, et quae sit eius voluntas, item quid sit iustum, quid iniustum, quid Deo, quid hominibus debeamus."³ This revelation of God by means of nature and reason was obscured in man because of his depraved morals and customs, and therefore it had to be repeated through Moses and the prophets; but these holy men did not add anything to what had already been revealed from the beginning.

"Quod vero Moses de Deo et voluntate Dei non alia neque plura docuerit, quam nos natura et ratio

¹Ibid. p. 235.

²Ibid. p. 236.

³Ibid. p. 241.

docet, id manifestum est ex Decalogo, qui est nobis natura notus et insitus, atque ideo omnes homines omnibus temporibus obligavit et obligat, et est praecipuum et summa doctrinae Mosaicae, ita ut tota doctrina Mosis de Deo et voluntate Dei in Decalogo comprehendatur."¹

The most primitive religion is also the truest in another respect, in its freedom from ceremonial or sacrament, such as baptism and circumcision. "Atque ita redibimus ad statum primorum hominum, qui etiam hunc naturalem et rationalem cultum Dei habuerunt, nec ullo initiationis signo usi sunt."²

This anonymous treatise is of special interest in giving a doctrinaire statement of religious opinion which at that time was not permitted in print, and which has therefore not been sufficiently recognized in the history of thought. As we read it, we can overhear those many discussions behind closed doors, both in England and on the Continent during the Renaissance, when, within small groups of trusted friends, new ideas were exchanged at the peril of the stake. With the gradual extension of freedom of thought, these Deistic ideas must have acquired a wider and more open circulation. It seems indeed highly probable that Lord Herbert of Cherbury, during his long residence in Paris, should have taken part in such discussions and thus become indebted to a Deistic tradition which, owing to the intolerance of the age, had long been transmitted orally.³

¹Ibid. p. 241.

²Ibid. p. 244.

³Strowski discusses the deistic leanings in Charron, in Pascal et son Temps, Paris (1909). I, 184-ff. The eminent scholar, M. F. Lachèvre, recently discovered a poem circulating about that time, called l'Antibigot ou les Quatrains du déiste, and published it in his Voltaire mourant, Paris (1908).

III

Deism Dissolved in Complete Scepticism

In its beginnings, Deism was therefore sceptical primarily regarding the pretence of each religion to a direct revelation from God, a divinely guided history and a divinely ordained mode of worship. Its scepticism was higher criticism. On the philosophical side, Deism was rationalistic and dogmatic, affirming the knowableness of religious truth and associating it with the rationalistic Stoic doctrine of the Law of Nature. The true religion must be universally evident to those who would seek it, without the assistance of any revelation or tradition; it must therefore also be manifested universally in all good and upright men. Herbert only went farther than previous Deists in investigating the problem of knowledge; he inquired critically into what they had assumed. But Herbert was at one with his predecessors in founding his religion on reason.

The sceptical spirit, nevertheless, pervaded the whole Deistic movement. Deism may be regarded as a stage in the development of modern scepticism; it was scepticism in an arrested development, the attempt of Renaissance enlightenment to find a via media between superstition and atheism. On its critical side it was modern, on its positive side it was a continuation of the tradition of the rational Law of Nature, which, as we have seen, was so important in the thought of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. This rationalism of the Deists, like the Platonic rationalism of Davies, evokes no response in modern readers, because the modern

mind is more deeply sceptical than these Renaissance and seventeenth century rationalists; their whole conception of the reason and the spiritual life has been subjected to a searching and destructive criticism. The Deistic movement dissolved in the eighteenth century, partly because it was too superficial, because it tapped too few of the springs of spiritual life, but partly also because its reliance on reason was shaken by the scepticism of such men as Hume.¹

¹Sayous, Les Déistes Anglais et le Christianisme, Paris (1882). Chapter VIII, La Décadence du Déisme. For the earlier penetration of philosophical scepticism into English Deism, see Villey, Pierre, L'Influence de Montaigne sur Charles Blount et sur les Déistes Anglais, in Revue du Seizième Siècle, Vol. I (1913), 190-219, 392-443.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SCEPTICISM AND MYSTICISM IN JOHN DONNE

I. Donne's Intellectual Development: Growing Dualism of Reason and Faith.- II. The Augustinianism of Donne.- III. The "Metaphysical" Style as an Expression of Donne's Mind.

The name of Donne has frequently recurred in this study. In an earlier chapter¹ I have referred to the statement of Courthope that Donne in his youth was a "sceptic in religion" and a "revolutionist in love," and discussed at length the intellectual and moral milieu of Donne's early verse. I suggested at the end of that chapter, and also later in a comparison of Donne with Sir John Davies,² that these early sceptical preoccupations of Donne had an important effect on his religious development. Courthope thought Donne was reclaimed from his youthful errors by his marriage, and made no attempt to show any influence of these early experiences on Donne the divine.³ Grierson, however, believed that "owing to the fullness of Donne's experience as a lover . . . there emerged in his poetry the suggestion of a new philosophy of love."⁴ And he noted the traces of scepticism in the Anniversaries, and in Donne's tolerant acceptance of all sects of Christianity and his quasi-political preference for the Anglican church.⁵ The purpose of this

¹Chapter III. See above, pp. 111-ff.

²See page 193.

³See Courthope, Hist. of Eng. Poetry. III, 147-ff.

⁴Donne's Poetical Works, ed. Grierson. II, xxxv.

⁵Ibid. II, 187-8 and 235-6.

chapter is to study more precisely than Grierson and Courthope have done the extent to which Donne may have been sceptical in philosophy and religion, and the effect of this scepticism on the "Metaphysical" style which distinguished Donne from his contemporaries and made him the founder of a school of poetry.

I

Donne's Intellectual Development: Growing Dualism of Faith and Reason

In a very thorough and learned treatise on the relation of Donne to Medieval philosophical doctrines, Miss Mary Paton Ramsay has incidentally taken issue with Courthope and sought to minimize the scepticism of Donne. Her main purpose was to show how thoroughly Donne was imbued with the Plotinian tradition which permeated Medieval thought.

"Chez lui," she says of Donne, "on découvre, en étudiant à fond ses écrits en prose and en vers, un penseur profondément religieux en même temps que fermement convaincu de la valeur de la raison humaine . . . Dans les hautes régions de la spéculation métaphysique dont les docteurs du moyen âge lui montraient le chemin, il n'y avait pas de place pour les doutes. Des doutes pouvaient tourmenter Donne devant des questions ecclésiastiques mêlées à des conceptions politiques, ou devant son propre coeur conscient de faiblesse et de péché. Mais non quand son esprit s'élève à ces hauteurs. Alors l'idée crée l'expression qui lui convient et nous voyons ce que Donne est capable de produire comme poète."¹

¹Ramsay, Mary Paton, Les Doctrines Médiévales chez Donne, Le Poète Métaphysicien de l'Angleterre, Oxford (1917). p. 18.

But we must object that this conception simplifies beyond recognition the complex and enigmatic personality of Donne and removes from his life that element of dramatic uncertainty and suspense which makes his biography so fascinating. Miss Ramsay's remarks are far more applicable to Sir John Davies. For Donne cannot be explained by any systematization of his ideas; his riddle must be read by a sympathetic appreciation of his personality, his greed for knowledge and experience, his difficulties, disappointments and dissatisfactions, and the increasing depth and intensity of his religious feeling; the final study of Donne must be biographical.

We must, to begin with, try to see life as it appeared to the young law student and courtier in London. He would have been greatly astonished had he heard predicted his future failure at court and his subsequent greatness as a divine. The young Donne was ambitious for a secular career and with reason felt himself the master of his fate. He was conscious from the first of very distinguished powers. Educated a Catholic, and anxious to make his way at a Protestant court, he decided to settle for himself the truth about the ecclesiastical question with which he was faced. In his own words, he avoided "any violent and sudden determination till I had, to the measure of my power and judgment, surveyed and digested the whole body of divinity, controverted between ours and the Roman Church."¹ This extended study, however, did not lead him to any definite decision for some years, but meanwhile he rose in his profession, saw military service, and was well on the way to a high position in the government. A sensitive, proud, high-bred young man,

¹Quoted from Pseudo-Martyr (1610), by Gosse, Life of Donne. I, 25.

of great intellectual and personal distinction, he was winning the friendship and confidence of important men. But Donne was at this time more than a successful lawyer and courtier and a student of "controverted divinity." In a letter, written probably in 1608, he complains that his early study of law was interfered with "by the worst voluptuousness, which is an hydroptic, immoderate desire of human learning and languages -- beautiful ornaments to great fortunes; but mine needed an occupation."¹ In a very interesting passage of The Calme, a passage which must perhaps not be taken as too literal autobiography, he suggests three reasons for his joining the Cadiz expedition of 1596:

"Whether a rotten state, and hope of gaine,
Or to disuse mee from the queasie paine
Of being belov'd, and loving, or the thirst
Of honour, or faire death, out pusht mee first,"

he will not say, letting the reader suppose that all three motives may have contributed to his decision.² This allusion to love as a "queasie paine," in a poem written already in 1597, is significant in the light of Donne's interest in the "libertine" naturalism of the Renaissance, which has been studied in an earlier chapter. Avid of experience and knowledge, filled with the Renaissance spirit of sounding the depths of life and truth, Donne had found no peace in that philosophy of life which gave such complete satisfaction to Montaigne. His intellectual and spiritual life began at the place where Montaigne's ended. In passing through this stage of naturalistic ethics, Donne came to know himself better. And this experience

¹Gosse, op. cit. I, 191.
²Grierson. I, 179.

could not but contribute to the inwardness, the passionate humility, the deep feeling of dependence on some source of spiritual power outside of himself, which marked the saintly divine of later years.

During these early years Donne had come in contact also, as we have seen, with the current philosophical scepticism, the denial of any standards of truth and goodness. The cynical Progresse of the Soule, written in 1601, closes with an allusion to this mode of thought:

"Ther's nothing simply good, nor ill alone,
Of every quality comparison,
The onely measure is, and judge, opinion."¹

He probably never doubted the powers of the reason so completely as Montaigne, and in his Essays in Divinity, written in 1614, he speaks in a tone of sarcasm of the philosophy of Sextus Empiricus.² But philosophers may exert a powerful influence even on men who are not their complete disciples, and Donne, who was fascinated in his youth by Pyrrhonism, owed to it some of his freedom from the rationalism and the scholastic theology which he frequently referred to with scorn as the doctrines of the Schools. And there are passages in his letters and sermons in which he reflects some of that dissatisfaction with the results of reason which marks philosophical sceptics. In a letter written in 1613 he says: "Except demonstrations," that is, mathematical proofs, "(and perchance there are very few of them) I find nothing without perplexities. I am grown more sensible of it by busying myself a little in the search of the eastern tongues,

¹Grierson. I, 316.

²Ramsay, op. cit. p. 123.

where a perpetual perplexity in the words cannot choose but cast a perplexity upon the things."¹ The criticism implied is perhaps more one of language than of reason itself, but it indicates a mind disposed to scepticism. And Donne did not look to philosophy to illuminate the path of life with such confidence as, for instance, Spenser; the pure of heart, he said in a sermon, get by their purity "this main purchase, that which all the books of all the philosophers could never teach them so much as what it was, that is true blessedness."² To appreciate what these passages mean we must relate them to the tendencies among Donne's contemporaries; they signify that Donne, one of the most intellectual of men, was too deeply critical of the reason ever to content himself in such rationalistic shallows as satisfied his contemporaries, Sir John Davies and Edward Herbert.

But Donne had early undertaken to find the true religion. In his satire, Kinde pittie chokes my spleene,³ he rebukes those who adhere to any sect without studying and thinking the problem through for themselves: Mirreus the Catholic, Crantz the Calvinist, Graius the Anglican, are sketched with a few strong, uncomplimentary strokes. Then there are others:

"Carelesse Phrygius doth abhorre
All, because all cannot be good, as one
Knowing some women whores, dares marry none.
Graccus loves all as one, and thinkes that so
As women do in divers countries goe
In divers habits, yet are still one kinde,
So doth, so is Religion; and this blind-
nesse too much light breeds."

¹Gosse, op. cit. II, 16.

²Donne, Works, ed. Alford, Henry, London (1839). I, 191.

³Grierson, I, 154-8.

Donne is confident that truth can be found by earnest effort, provided one goes back far enough to the original sources and cultivates an open mind. And one cannot escape the obligation of making a choice:

"unmoved thou
Of force must one, and forc'd but one allow;
And the right; aske thy father which is shee,
Let him aske his; though truth and falshood bee
Neare twins, yet truth a little elder is;
Be busie to seeke her, beleeeve mee this,
Hee's not of none, nor worst, that seekes the best.
To adore, or scorne an image, or protest,
May all be bad; doubt wisely; in strange way
To stand inquiring right, is not to stray;
To sleepe, or sunne wrong, is."

But unceasing labor is necessary.

"On a huge hill,
Cragged, and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will
Reach her, about must, and about must goe;
And what the hills suddennes resists, winne so;
Yet strive so, that before age, deaths twilight,
Thy Soule rest, for none can worke in that night."

An interesting commentary on this satire, which was probably written between 1594 and 1597,¹ is to be found in several letters, from about 1607 to Donne's entry into orders. All sects, he says in the first, dated by Gosse 1607, need to be purged of false doctrines:

"I begin to think that as litigious men tired with suits admit any arbitrament, and princes travailed with long and wasteful war descend to such conditions of peace as they are soon after ashamed to have embraced; so philosophers, and so all sects of Christians, after long disputations and controversies, have allowed many things for positive and dogmatical truths which are not worthy

¹Grierson. II, 103.

of that dignity; and so many doctrines have grown to be ordinary diet and food of our spirits, and have place in the pap of catechisms, which were admitted but as physic in that present distemper, or accepted in a lazy weariness, when men so they might have something to rely upon, and to excuse themselves from more painful inquisition, never examined what that was."¹

In a later letter, impossible to date exactly, Donne expresses a broad tolerance towards all sects as containing some truth.

"You know," he says, "I never fettered nor imprisoned Religion, not straightening it friarly, ad Religiones factitias (as the Romans call well their orders of Religion), nor immuring it in a Rome, or a Wittemberg, or a Geneva; they are all virtual beams of one Sun, and wheresoever they find clay hearts, they harden them and moulder them into dust; and they entender and mollify waxen. They are not so contrary as the North and South Poles, and that (?) they are co-natural pieces of one circle. Religion is Christianity, which being too spiritual to be seen by us, doth therefore take an apparent body of good life and works, so salvation requires an honest Christian."²

But in a letter written in 1615 he goes even further, and suggests that the merits of the various religions or sects within Christianity may not be absolute, and that violent conversions from one to another may be dangerous, irrespective of the relative degrees of ascertainable truth in each.

"As some bodies," he says, "are as wholesomely nourished as ours with acorns, and endure nakedness, both which would be dangerous to us, if we for them should leave our former habits, though theirs were the primitive diet and custom; so are many souls well fed with such forms and dressings of religion, as would distemper and misbecome us, and make us corrupt towards God, if any human circumstance moved it, and in the opinion of men, though none.

¹Gosse. I, 174.

²Ibid. I, 226.

You shall seldom see a coin, upon which the stamp were removed, though to imprint it better, but it looks awry and squint. And so, for the most part, do minds which have received divers impressions.

"I will not, nor need to you, compare the religions. The channels of God's mercies run through both fields; and they are sister teats of His graces, yet both diseased and infected, but not both alike."¹

Donne never found the one true church which he had sought for. Even in the Holy Sonnets, written after 1617, when he was eminent as an Anglican divine, he is still seeking, now no longer in "controverted theology," but in prayer, for a church to which he can give undivided, uncritical allegiance.

"Show me deare Christ, thy Spouse, so bright and cleare."²

In his brave search after truth amid the controversies of religious factions, he had suffered defeat and disillusionment.

Donne had, moreover, experienced to a greater degree than most Englishmen of his time the disquieting effect of the new astronomy. He was an eager student of the books of Galileo and Kepler as soon as they appeared.³ And in The First Anniversary, 1611, occurs the frequently quoted passage beginning:

"And new Philosophy calls all in doubt."⁴

"Copernicism in the mathematics," he says in a letter in 1615, "hath

¹Ibid. II, 78.

²Grierson. I, 330. -- This sonnet was omitted, for obvious reasons, in seventeenth century editions, and was first printed in Gosse's Life, II, 371.

³See above. pp. 200, 213.

⁴Grierson. I, 237. Cf. letter to Countess of Bedford, Ibid. p. 196.

carried earth farther up, from the stupid centre; and yet not honoured it, nor advantaged it, because for the necessity of appearances, it hath carried heaven so much higher from it."¹ Even towards the end of his life, in a sermon preached in 1626, he reproaches his age with the slowness with which the new science is accepted.

"What one thing," he asks, "do we know perfectly? Whether we consider arts, or sciences, the servant knows but according to the proportion of his master's knowledge in that art, and the scholar knows but according to the proportion of his master's knowledge in that science; young men mend not their sight by using old men's spectacles; and yet we look upon nature, but with Aristotle's spectacles, and upon the body of man, but with Galen's, and upon the frame of the world, but with Ptolemy's spectacles."²

He makes two pointed uses of this reference to science. In the first place, he manifests the full force of his scepticism towards the philosophical and scientific knowledge handed down by tradition.

"Almost all knowledge," he says, "is rather like a child that is embalmed to make mummy, than that is nursed to make a man; rather conserved in the stature of the first age, than grown to be greater; and if there be any addition to knowledge, it is rather a new knowledge, than a greater knowledge; rather a singularity in a desire of proposing something that was not known at all before, than an improving, an advancing, a multiplying of former inceptions; and by that means, no knowledge comes to be perfect. One philosopher thinks he has dived to the bottom, when he says, he knows nothing but this, that he knows nothing; and yet another thinks, that he hath expressed more knowledge than he, in saying, that he knows not so much as that, that he knows nothing."³

¹Gosse. II. 78-9.
²Alford. III. 472.
³Ibid. III. 472.

In the second place, Donne uses the new science here, as in The First Anniversary, to illustrate the transitoriness and imperfection of this earth and all it contains.

"I need not call in new philosophy, that denies a settledness, an acquiescence in the very body of the earth, but makes the earth to move in that place, where we thought the sun had moved; I need not that help, that the earth itself is in motion, to prove this, that nothing upon earth is permanent; the assertion will stand of itself, till some man assign me some instance, something that a man may rely upon and find permanent."¹

For Donne, as for Spenser, the mutability of the world seemed one of the great spiritual problems, and his sense of its transitoriness was rendered the more acute by a new scientific knowledge that never troubled Spenser.

So far we have considered Donne's inner life primarily on its intellectual side. He began his course, full of confidence, on smooth seas; but storms arose and made his whole life tempestuous. It was not only the sudden dismissal from his secretaryship and the years of privation and anxiety and sickness which produced in Donne a profound dejection. Donne was a man of intellect, whose desire for truth was deep and imperative, and yet he lived throughout his years in a state of uncertainty regarding some of the most important questions relating to his spiritual life. To understand Donne we must appreciate that he was not a formulator of truth, but ever a seeker after it, pursuing it patiently for long years, and suffering a painful dejection and disillusionment. He was intellectually tormented. Doubt was to him not a soft pillow on which to rest his

¹Ibid. III, 483. This parallel has escaped Grierson, who otherwise has illustrated Donne's poetry so carefully with passages from the

head, but restlessness and pain and endless labor and search.

Donne had, however, in the meantime found a new source of spiritual strength and comfort. It seems probable, as Courthope says,¹ that his happy marriage had a redeeming influence upon him and inspired his nobler love poems. But he had a religious awakening also. In one of his love poems, A Valediction, occurs a striking statement that "all Divinity is love or wonder,"² an idea which Donne repeated years afterwards in The First Anniversary.

"The world containes
Princes for armes, and Counsellors for braines,
Lawyers for tongues, Divines for hearts, and more,
The Rich for stomackes, and for backes, the Poore;
The Officers for hands, Merchants for feet,
By which, remote and distant Countries meet.
But those fine spirits which do tune, and set
This Organ, are those peeces which beget
Wonder and love; and these were shee."³

The thought was deeply imbedded in his mind that the soul of the world was not knowable to reason, that the true theology appeals in some other way; in some personal experience or crisis he had had a flash of insight into a mystery not explained by "controverted divinity" and become a mystic. From that time reason began to lose its preeminence, his spiritual life gained power and intensity, and his prayer became

"Looke to mee faith, and looke to my faith, God."

The relation between reason and faith is frequently discussed or alluded to by Donne. He begins a verse letter to the

sermons.

¹Courthope, Hist. of Eng. Poetry. III, 156.

²Grierson, I, 30.

³Ibid. I, 246. Cf. "All love is wonder," in The Anagram, ed. cit. I, 81.

Countess of Bedford, written some time between 1608 and 1614, with the statement:

"Reason is our Soules left hand, Faith her right,
By these wee reach divinity."

But he would,

"not to encrease, but to expresse
My faith, as I beleeve, so understand."¹

He labored always to understand. "No one may doubt," he wrote in a letter, in 1612, "but that that religion is certainly best which is reasonablest."² And in his Elegy on Prince Henry, 1613, he almost identifies the spheres of reason and faith.

"Looke to mee faith, and looke to my faith, God;
For both my centers feelee this period.
Of waight one center, one of greatnesse is;
And Reason is that center, Faith is this;
For into'our reason flow, and there do end
All, that this naturall world doth comprehend:
Quotidian things, and equidistant hence,
Shut in, for man, in one circumference.
But for th' enormous greatnesse, which are
So disproportion'd, and so angulare,
As is Gods essence, place and providence,
Where, how, when, what soules do, departed hence,
These things (eccentrique else) on faith do strike;
Yet neither all, nor upon all, alike.
For reason, put to'her best extension,
Almost meetes faith, and makes both centers one."³

The reason, too, might become a valuable defender of the faith against rationalistic attacks. "It is not enough for you," Donne said in a sermon, 1623, "to rest in imaginary faith, and easiness in believing, except you know also what, and why, and how you come to that belief. Implicit believers, ignorant believers,

¹Grierson. I, 189.

²Gosse. II, 8.

³Grierson. I, 267.

the adversary may swallow; but the understanding believer, he must chew, and pick bones, before he come to assimilate him, and make him like himself."¹ Nevertheless Donne was troubled by the consciousness of a contradiction between reason and faith. In his Litany, written about 1609 or 1610, he had already formulated for himself the prayer:

"Let not my minde be blinder by more light
Nor Faith, by Reason added, lose her sight."²

From the numerous passages on this subject in the sermons I select one, preached on Christmas Day, 1621, on the text, "He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light" (John, 1.8.).

"In all philosophy," he said, "there is not so dark a thing as light; as the sun, which is fons lucis naturalis, the beginning of natural light, is the most evident thing to be seen, and yet the hardest to be looked upon, so is natural light to our reason and understanding. Nothing clearer, for it is clearness itself, nothing darker, it is enwrapped in so many scruples. Nothing nearer, for it is around about us, nothing more remote, for we know neither entrance, nor limits of it. Nothing more easy, for a child discerns it, nothing more hard, for no man understands it. It is apprehensible by sense, and not comprehensible by reason. If we wink, we cannot choose but see it, if we stare, we know it never the better. No man is yet got so near to the knowledge of the qualities of light, as to know whether light itself be a quality, or a substance. If then this natural light be so dark to our natural reason, if we shall offer to pierce so far into the light of this text, the essential light Christ Jesus, (in his nature, or but in his offices) or the supernatural light of faith and grace, . . . if we search farther into these points, than the Scripture hath opened us a way, how shall we hope to unentangle, or extricate themselves? They had a precious composition for lamps, amongst the ancients, reserved

¹Alford. I, 314.
²Grierson. I, 340.

especially for tombs, which kept light for many hundreds of years; we have had in our age experience, in some casual openings of ancient vaults, of finding such lights, as were kindled, (as appeared by their inscriptions) fifteen or sixteen hundred years before; but, as soon as that light comes to our light, it vanishes. So this eternal, and this supernatural light, Christ and faith, enlightens, warms, purges, and does all the profitable offices of fire, and light, if we keep it in the right sphere, in the proper place, (that is, if we consist in points necessary to salvation, and revealed in the Scripture) but when we bring this light to the common light of reason, to our inferences, and consequences, it may be in danger to vanish itself, and perchance extinguish our reason too; we may search so far, and reason so long of faith and grace, as that we may lose not only them, but even our reason too, and sooner become mad than good."¹

Only the most salient features of the mental biography of Donne can be touched on in so brief a sketch as this. But perhaps what has been said may afford an insight into those permanent impulses and their conflicts which dominated his enigmatical life. Gifted with a profound intellect, he sought from the beginning to unravel the mysteries of all knowledge, including divinity. But though he felt himself far more successful than most men about him, whose easy acquiescence in tradition he lashed with scorn, he was forced to confess that he was in some measure defeated, that knowledge is difficult and uncertain even to the best minds, and that much philosophizing is often a vanity of the spirit. But while he was suffering this disillusionment he was also discovering a new source of spiritual power, faith. The student, lawyer and courtier became a mystic. He had, however, no sudden revelation of his spiritual powers. He had to pass through years of privation, dis-

¹Alford. V, 55.

appointment, doubt, years of the "agony and exercise of sense and spirit,"¹ before he yielded his life and soul fully to the guidance of faith. And even then his reason was ever seeking to equal faith in power and authority, but ever falling back unequal. This defeat of the reason was therefore a spiritual gain; for only by it could Donne's mysticism have developed so fully and intensely, free from the inhibitions of rationalism. The darkening of the understanding, Donne has said himself, is one of those afflictions by which God turns the soul to himself.

Those helps, he said in a sermon, which are "deduced from philosophy and natural reason, are strong enough against afflictions of this world, as long as we can use them, as long as these helps of reason and learning are alive, and awake, and actuated in us, they are able to sustain us from sinking under the afflictions of this world, for, they have sustained many a Plato, and a Socrates, and Seneca in such cases. But when part of the affliction shall be, that God worketh upon the spirit itself, and damps that, that he casts a sooty cloud upon the understanding, and darkens that, that he doth exuere hominem, divest, strip the man of the man, eximere hominem, take the man out of the man, and withdraw and frustrate his natural understanding so, as that, to this purpose, he is no man, yet even in this case, God may mend thee, in marring thee, he may build thee up in dejecting thee, he may infuse another, ego vir, another manhood into thee, and though thou canst not say ego vir, I am that moral man, safe in my natural reason and philosophy, that is spent, yet Ego vir, I am that Christian man, who have seen this affliction in the cause thereof, so far off, as in my sin in Adam, and the remedy of this affliction, so far off, as in the death of Christ Jesus I am the man, that cannot repine, nor murmur, since I am the cause; I am the man that cannot despair, since Christ is the remedy."²

¹Gosse. I, 190.

²Alford. V, 320.

II

The Augustinianism of Donne

Throughout her study of Donne, Miss Ramsay has repeated that he was peculiarly the disciple of Augustine,¹ but in her eagerness to prove Donne a Plotinian she has missed the significance of this discipleship. For it has a double significance, first regarding Donne's relation to Medieval thought, and second regarding the nature of his religious experience.

In an earlier chapter some reference was made to the influence of Augustine among the Nominalists and Mystics of the Middle Ages, counteracting the intellectualism of Aquinas.² With the Reformation this opposition of Thomism and Augustinianism was continued and intensified. Both Calvinism and Lutheranism were distinctly Augustinian in spirit, though Anglicanism here as elsewhere was compromising. In the Catholic church the revival of Augustinianism by the Jansenists encountered powerful and determined opposition, and was at last suppressed and declared heretical. Although it was a conflict of temperaments, of modes of religious experience rather than of philosophical schools, this opposition of Thomism and Augustinianism is of great importance in understanding some of the religious leaders of the Reformation and Renaissance, and especially Donne. A passage quoted earlier³ from the beginning of the Summa Contra Gentiles will recall the spirit of Aquinas.

¹Ramsay, op.cit. pp. 179, 181-2, 220, 225, 252-3, 257, etc.

²See above, pp. 166-7.

³See above, p. 39.

"The prime author and mover of the universe," thought Aquinas, "is intelligence. Therefore the last end of the universe must be the good of the intelligence, and that is truth. Truth then must be the final end of the whole universe." Happiness consists in the perfect activity of the intellect, and the end of all "subsistent intelligences" is to know the highest universal, Ens, Being, God. We can understand how Donne must have been attracted by this intellectual doctrine; in his Essays in Divinity he even places Aquinas beside Augustine, calling him, as he addresses himself to God, "that other instrument and engine of thine, whom Thou hadst so enabled that nothing was too mineral and centrick for the search and reach of his wit."¹ But Donne learned in the school of affliction and anguish, which he so often refers to as the best school for the soul, that he needed another blessedness than truth and knowledge. Thomism, in its intellectualistic interpretation of the world, was an exposition, under Neo-Platonic and Aristotelian terms, of the Logos. But both Augustine and Donne were dissatisfied with the impersonal and intellectual conception of God in the Platonic tradition. In Plato we may find God, said Donne, but "without a Christ."² The Word become flesh and living among us, partaking of our miseries and frailties and sins, giving us the inexpressible consolation and comfort of a personal love and sacrifice for us, this was the religion of Augustine and Donne.³

¹Quoted by Ramsay, op.cit. p. 286, n.5.

²Alford. III, 47.

³Miss Ramsay has noticed this similarity between Donne and Augustine, and quotes an eloquent passage on the latter from Gaston Boissier. op. cit. p. 252.

They desired, not primarily to know God, but to rest their souls in the bosom of God, in the bosom of Christ, who was God become humanity and therefore full of the sympathy they craved. This sense of the living personality of God and of Christ, and the dependence of his own soul upon its preciousness in the sight of Christ, is the essence of Donne's religious experience.

Humility is therefore the beginning of wisdom; the consciousness of his weakness and sin and misery overwhelmed Donne, but he desired and cultivated this feeling in order to intensify his religious longing. Already in The First Anniversary he had expressed the need of some transcendental power to save humanity from itself. His anatomy of the world was to teach, he said,

"that except thou feed (not banquet) on
The supernaturall food, Religion,
Thy better Growth growes withered, and scant;
Be more then man, or thou'rt lesse then an Ant."¹

Therefore he was ever contemplating death in its most repugnant aspects, that he might realize how poor a thing is man, how entirely dependent on divine power. And therefore, too, the humiliation of the intellect was necessary, lest the feeble light of the reason make us blind to the greater light of faith. In a sermon preached in 1624, on the conversion of St. Paul, he speaks of the light which struck Paul blind.

"This blindness of which we speak," he says,
"which is a sober and temperate abstinence from the
immoderate study, and curious knowledges of this

¹Grierson. I, 237. -- Was Donne, when he wrote this passage, recollecting the last page of the Apology of Raymond Sebond?

world, this holy simplicity of the soul, is not a darkness, a dimness, a stupidity of the understanding, contracted by living in a corner, it is not an idle retiring into a monastery, or into a village, or a country solitude, it is not a lazy affectation of ignorance; not darkness, but a greater light, must make us blind . . . There are birds, that when their eyes are sealed, still soar up, and up, till they have spent all their strength. Men blinded with the lights of this world, soar still into higher places, or higher knowledges, or higher opinions; but the light of heaven humbles us, and lays flat that soul, which the leaven of this world had puffed and swelled up."¹

Donne's religious experience, then, was a mystical one, the sense of his dependence on the love and grace of God in Christ. It was not a rational experience, and, though he sought always to make it reasonable and even comprehensible, he had to recognize that his spiritual life was beyond the power of reason and weakened by a rationalistic mode of thought. He belonged to the anti-intellectual tradition of Augustine. And it is perhaps partly due to Donne's influence on the religious and poetical development of Herbert and Vaughan, that we find in them, also, a recognition of this dualism of faith and reason. Herbert was hardly a mystic; but in a poem called Divinitie he says:

"As men, for fear the starres should sleep and nod,
 And trip at night, have spheres suppli'd;
 As if a starre were duller then a clod,
 Which knows his way without a guide:

Just so the other heav'n they also serve,
 Divinities transcendent skie:
 Which with the edge of wit they cut and carve.
 Reason triumphs, and faith lies by

¹Alford. II, 307-8.

Then burn thy Epicycles, foolish man;
 Break all thy spheres, and save thy head.
 Faith needs no staffe of flesh, but stoutly can
 To heav'n alone both go and leade."¹

But Vaughan, in a poem with the sceptical title Vanity of Spirit, has explained how his repeated attempts to know the secrets of the world and of himself had failed, one after another, until, his intellect exhausted, he gave himself up to the mystical experience which can be complete only in another world.

"Quite spent with thoughts, I left my cell, and lay
 Where a shrill spring tun'd to the early day.
 I begg'd here long, and groan'd to know
 Who gave the clouds so brave a bow,
 Who bent the spheres, and circled in
 Corruption with this glorious ring;
 What is His name, and how I might
 Descry some part of His great light.
 I summon'd Nature; pierc'd through all her store;
 Broke up some seals, which none had touch'd before
 Her womb, her bosom, and her head,
 Where all her secrets lay abed,
 I rifled quite; and having past
 Through all the creatures, came at last
 To search myself, where I did find
 Traces, and sounds of a strange kind.
 Here of this mighty spring I found some drills,
 With echoes beaten from th' eternal hills.
 Weak beams and fires flash'd to my sight,
 Like a young East, or moonshine night,
 Which show'd me in a nook cast by
 A piece of much antiquity,
 And hieroglyphics quite dismember'd
 And broken letters scarce remember'd.
 I took them up, and -- much joy'd -- went about
 T' unite those pieces, hoping to find out
 The mystery; but this ne'er done,
 That little light I had was gone.
 It griev'd me much. At last, said I,
 'Since in these veils my eclips'd eye
 May not approach Thee -- for at night
 Who can have commerce with the light? --
 I'll disapparel, and to buy
 But one half-glance, most gladly die.'"²

¹The English Works of George Herbert, ed. Palmer. III, 97.
²Vaughan, Henry, Poems, ed. Chambers. I, 57.

III

The "Metaphysical" Style as an Expression of Donne's Mind

We have seen in the Introduction to this study how criticism of the style of the "Metaphysical" poets has progressed from the theory that this peculiar style was a literary fad or affectation, an intellectual gymnastic, to the serious attempt to relate it in some way to the manner in which these poets understood the world. Johnson and Hallam represent the earlier theory, and Courthope, Grierson and Palmer have made the most suggestive contributions to the later method.¹ These later students have all insisted that the "Metaphysical" style was in some way connected with the disintegration of Medieval thought. Courthope says this style is characterized by three Medieval modes of expression: paradox, hyperbole and excess of metaphor; elsewhere he says that in the Renaissance there arose "a new kind of Pyrrhonism" which made Medieval philosophy obsolete, but that "many poets, in their ideal representations of Nature, seized upon the rich materials of the old and ruined philosophy to decorate the structures which they built out of their lawless fancy. On such foundations rose the school of metaphysical wit, of which the earliest and most remarkable example is furnished in the poetry of John Donne."² Palmer, on the other hand, emphasizes the modern quality of the "Metaphysical" style, and finds its explanation in the new Renaissance spirit, its

¹See above, pp. 15-25.

²Courthope, Hist. of Eng. Poetry. III, 147-8.

individualism, its spirit of rebellion against authority, its introspection; for the term "metaphysical" he would substitute as more accurate and illuminating, the term "psychological."

Grierson, following in the main Courthope, sees however also in this poetry a surprising modern quality, without explaining very definitely the relation between thought and style. Admirable as these suggestions are, therefore, they remain apparently contradictory and inconclusive.

I do not intend here to give any complete account, from either the historical or the esthetic point of view, of the "conceit" in Renaissance poetry; its origins were too remote and the explanation of its popularity is too complex. My one purpose is to glance briefly at Donne's use of it, to see in what way the "conceit" was made expressive of his complex nature, and thus not only to appreciate better the sincerity of his mode of expression, but, perhaps, to come to a more definite conception of what is medieval and what is modern in his style, both in prose and poetry.

The "conceit," everyone knows, was common in English poetry before Donne. He appropriated it and gave it that peculiar quality and power which was his own, but which influenced his admiring successors to the extent of forming a poetical school. Professor Alden has given a definition of the "conceit," based on an analysis of it in Sidney and Shakespeare: "a conceit is the elaboration of a verbal or an imaginative figure, or the substitution of a logical for an imaginative figure, with so considerable a use of an intellectual process as to take precedence, at least for the

moment, of the normal poetic process."¹ This definition expresses admirably also that dualism of Donne's nature which heightened the disharmony between his intellect and that poetic and mystical experience out of which his poetry was made. His constant return upon himself, his study of his own feelings and emotions, and his attempts to state them in intellectual terms, all this introspection and analysis is as apparent in his sermons as in his verse. It is especially marked in Donne because of the imperfect harmony between the intellectual and poetic sides of his nature. Schelling coined an illuminating phrase when he said that "no one, excepting Shakespeare. . . has done so much to develop intellectualized emotion in the Elizabethan lyric as John Donne."²

This intellectuality, or "wit," as it was then called, of Donne's poetry and prose appears in other ways than the "conceit"; it is sometimes paradox, sometimes hyperbole, sometimes a plain and straightforward reasoning about his subject. But in its most characteristic form it is a symbolism, a rendering of spiritual or emotional experience in terms apprehensible, not to sense or imagination primarily, but to the intellect. We may quote one of his most daring, yet successful, conceits in his early verse, the familiar one of the compass. It expresses a transcendental conception of the unity of two souls in love:

"But we by a love, so much refin'd,
That our selves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care lesse, eyes, lips, and hands to misse.

¹Alden, Raymond Macdonald, The Lyrical Conceit of the Elizabethans, in Studies in Philology. Vol. XIV (1917), 137.

²Schelling, A Book of Elizabethan Lyrics, Boston (1895). Intro-

Our two soules therefore, which are one,
 Though I must goe, endure not yet
 A breach, but an expansion,
 Like gold to avery thinnesse beate.

If they be two, they are two so
 As stiffe twin compasses are two,
 Thy soule the fixt foot, makes no show
 To move, but doth, if the'other doe.

And though it in the center sit,
 Yet when the other far doth come,
 It leanes, and hearkens after it,
 And growes erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to mee, who must
 Like th'other foot, obliquely runne;
 Thy firmnes makes my circle just,
 And makes me end, where I begunne."¹

By using the "conceit," an intellectual and impersonal mode of expression, to communicate his most intensely personal, inward and mystical feelings, Donne gave it imaginative and poetic power. The concepts of the intellect became the symbols of inexpressible spiritual experience. The recent editor of Donne's prose, Mr. Logan Pearsall Smith, after reading and re-reading his volumes of sermons, speaks of this mysticism, this "something baffling which still eludes our last analysis. Reading these old hortatory and dogmatic pages, the thought suggests itself that Donne is often saying something else, something poignant and personal, and yet, in the end, incommunicable to us."² Only long reading, perhaps, can give us the full sense of this incommunicable feeling beneath some of the apparently arid discussions in the ser-

duction, xxiii.

¹Grierson. I, 50.

²Smith, Logan Pearsall, Donne's Sermons, Oxford (1920).
Introduction, xxxv.

mons. In his labor to express it he draws upon all life and all knowledge, upon the most homely matters of daily experience as well as upon the distinctions of the Scholastic philosophy. It is a great error to represent Donne's mind as always preoccupied with the subtleties of Medieval thought. He was really preoccupied with the subtleties of his own soul. Donne preached out of his own experience, as he had startled his contemporaries, and all his understanding readers since, by the sincerity of his poetry written out of his own experience. No one has looked more directly upon the realities of life, no one has had his vision of reality less impeded by tradition, than Donne. But in the expression of even the most subtle, evanescent or mystical phases of his experience, he put it into intellectual terms, into "conceits." There is a truth, in spite of its perverse and unsympathetic statement, in the comment of Macdonald: "The central thought of Dr. Donne is nearly sure to be just: the subordinate thoughts by means of which he unfolds it are often grotesque, and so wildly associated as to remind one of the lawlessness of a dream, wherein mere suggestion without choice or fitness rules the sequence."¹

To illustrate this symbolical value of the "conceit" in Donne's sermons I shall quote first a passage in which the "conceits" are called "images," and in which there is no borrowing from Medieval philosophy; the real subject is transcendental, but is evoked by a succession of not unfamiliar metaphors and symbols.

"No image, but the image of God, can fit our soul; every other seal is too narrow, too shallow

¹Macdonald, George, England's Antiphon, N.Y. (n.d.). p.114.

for it. The magistrate is sealed with the Lion; the Wolf will not fit that seal: the magistrate hath a power in his hand, but not oppression. Princes are sealed with the Crown; the Mitre will not fit that seal. Powerfully, and graciously they protect the Church, and are supream heads of the Church; but they minister not the Sacraments of the Church: they give preferments; but they give not the capacitie of preferments: they give order who shall have, but they have not Orders by which they are enabled to have that they have. Men of inferior and laborious callings in the world are sealed with the Crosse; a Rose, or a bunch of Grapes will not answer that seal: ease and plentie in age must not be looked for without crosses, and labour, and industrie in youth. All men, Prince, and people; Clergie, and Magistrate, are sealed with the image of God, with a conformitie to him; and worldly seals will not answer that, nor fill up that seal. We should wonder to see a mother in the midst of many sweet children, passing her time in making babies and puppets for her own delight. We should wonder to see a man, whose chambers and galleries were full of curious masterpieces, thrust in a village fayre, to look upon sixpennie pictures, & three-farthing prints. We have all the image of God at home; and we all make babies, fancies of honour in our ambitions. The masterpiece is our own, in our own bosome; and we thrust in countrey fayres, that is, we endure the distempers of any unseasonable weather, in night-journeys and watchings; we endure the oppositions, and scorns, and triumphs of a rivall, and competitour, that seeks with us, and shares with us. We endure the guiltinesse and reproach of having deceived the trust which a confident friend reposes in us, and solicit his wife or daughter. We endure the decay of fortune of bodie, of soul, of honour, to possesse lovers pictures; pictures that are not originals, not made by that hand of God, Nature; but artificiall beauties: and for that bodie we give a soul; and for that drug, which might have been bought where they bought it, for a shilling, we give an estate. The image of God is more worth then all substances; and we give it for colours, for dreams, for shadows."¹

We may compare the method of this passage, which seems to the modern

¹Donne's Sermons, ed. Smith. p.153.

reader comparatively simple and natural, with another, in which Donne uses in a similar manner symbols which are antiquated to us:

"One of the most convenient Hieroglyphicks of God, is a Circle; and a Circle is endlesse; whom God loves, hee loves to the end: and not onely to their own end, to their death, but to his end, and his end is, that he might love them still. His hailestones, and his thunderbolts, and his showres of bloud (emblemes and instruments of his Judgements) fall downe in a direct line, and affect and strike some one person, or place: His Sun, and Moone, and Starres, (Emblemes and Instruments of his Blessings) move circularly, and communicate themselves to all. His Church is his chariot; in that, he moves more gloriously, then in the Sun; as much more, as his begotten Son exceeds his created Sun, and his Son of glory, and of his right hand, the Sun of the firmament; and this Church, his chariot, moves in that communicable motion, circularly; It began in the East, it came to us, and is passing now, shining out now, in the farthest West."¹

Donne's experience in the second passage is as comprehensible to us as that in the first, but the imagery gives it a Medieval flavor.

In conclusion I shall quote two characteristic passages from his Divine Poems, both illustrating his feeling of dependence on God for forgiveness, strength and blessedness. We know how deep that feeling was in Donne, and we cannot doubt the sincerity of even such "conceited" verse as the beginning of The Litanie:

"Father of Heaven, and him, by whom
It, and us for it, and all else, for us
Thou madest, and govern'st ever, come
And re-create mee, now growne ruinous:
My heart is by dejection, clay,
And by selfe-murder, red.
From this red earth, O Father, purge away
All vicious tinctures, that new fashioned
I may rise up from death, before I'am dead."²

¹Ibid. p. 134.

²Grierson. I, 338.

In the concluding stanzas of his Hymne to God, my God, in my sicknesse, the "conceit" is raised almost to sublimity by its intenseness:

"We thinke that Paradise and Calvarie,
Christs Crosse, and Adams tree, stood in one place;
 Looke Lord, and finde both Adams met in me;
 As the first Adams sweat surrounds my face,
 May the last Adams blood my soule embrace.

So, in his purple wrapp'd receive mee Lord,
 By these his thornes give me his other Crowne;
 And as to others soules I preach'd thy word,
 Be this my Text, my Sermon to mine owne,
 Therefore that he may raise the Lord Throws down."¹

The style of Donne, then, was an expression of his mind. He was a "psychological" poet in the sense that he found his poetical material in his own experience; his poetry, like his sermons, is introspective. The old term "metaphysical" is more difficult to justify. If it is intended to signify a poet expounding Medieval philosophy, or any philosophy, it is not applicable to Donne; he expounded no system, he was not a philosophical poet in the sense that Lucretius was, or Sir John Davies, his contemporary. If by the epithet we mean only that Donne used, in his "conceits," some of the terms and distinctions of Medieval thought, it may be admitted to be partially applicable, though misleading in its emphasis. Donne took his imagery wherever he found it -- from Renaissance science, from daily life, or from the Church Fathers or the disquisitions of the Schools. He used imagery understood by the learned man of his time. But his purpose was to express his inner

¹Ibid. I, 368.

self, his moods, whims, emotions, aspirations, in their infinite complexity and subtlety. The genuineness of his poetic and religious nature shines through the crabbed verse and tortured "conceits." He is therefore modern, because he is the contemporary with whomsoever can understand and share his experiences. But he is modern in a more special sense, in that his religious experience is neither Classical nor Medieval in nature, but like that of "the first of the moderns," his master Augustine.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of these chapters has been to study the scepticism which accompanied the individualistic spirit of the Renaissance. But scepticism is a dissolvent. Our attention has throughout been called away from the creative energy which made the period so astonishingly full of great achievements in literature and art, and of great personalities in action. The splendor of the Renaissance is not reflected in the pages of this study. And yet it may be serviceable to remember that, for all its splendor and greatness of imagination, the Renaissance was truly alive with intellectual conflict, that it was full of new thought and audacious theorizing, that traditions had to defend their ground inch by inch. It is an error to see in the Renaissance merely a great wave of enthusiasm and power, which united all men in common ideals and purposes. A closer view reveals a multiplicity of factions, adherents of opposing traditions, sharp clashes of ideals and temperaments. This is no doubt to some extent true of every age, and literary history should recognize more fully than it has done this dramatic element in the history of thought. But it is especially true of the Renaissance, an era of individualism, marked by constant new discovery both of the physical world and of the history and nature of man himself. And the Renaissance was an age of intellectual readjustment as well as of conflict. For individualism means precisely that tradition has lost its authority, and that it must constantly be modified by the individual to accord with his new experience and knowledge. The importance of this

intellectual conflict and readjustment is being recognized more and more by students of the English Renaissance. The application of it to the greatest English poet of the seventeenth century has been suggested in a new essay just from the press.

"Milton's case was not unique," writes Professor C. A. Moore. "Disturbed, like many other thoughtful men of the seventeenth century, by the new train of ideas growing out of scientific discovery, by the liberal doctrines of neo-Platonic philosophy, by various forms of mysticism, and by other teaching that either openly contradicted the Christian dogma or at least required compromise and adjustment, he endeavored to satisfy the demands of his own intellectual conscience by harmonizing the ancient creed with various liberal doctrines, some of which in the end gave rise to the skepticism of the eighteenth century. His endeavor to pour the new wine into the old bottle did not succeed."¹

Whether or not one agrees with the conclusions of Mr. Moore, his emphasis on the intellectual conflict in the period is one of the symptoms of a general tendency among students of literature.

As Medievalism affirmed in its constructive effort an ideal exactly opposite to the general spirit of the Renaissance, it forms the proper point of departure in a study of the disintegrating and sceptical element in the later period. The Renaissance was in many respects consciously hostile towards the Middle Ages, in spite of its great indebtedness to it. The conflict between individualism and the universal ideals of Medievalism had, in fact, already reached its height in the Middle Ages; the Renaissance began in the thirteenth century. In studying the opposition between the Medieval and the Renaissance spirit, therefore, we must not seek to

¹Moore, C.A., The Conclusion of Paradise Lost, PMLA (March, 1921). p. 12.

confine each within chronological limits, but study them as they co-existed from the Middle Ages down through the seventeenth century, and even later. For as the Renaissance did not begin in 1453 or 1492 or at any other ascertainable date, so neither has Medievalism ever completely disappeared.

The great constructive effort of the Middle Ages is perhaps not sufficiently appreciated in our day; we see it through the eyes of the Renaissance, as a great heresy. But it was a noble attempt to organize civilization in a permanent, universal and final manner. The dreams of a universal church, of a universal empire, and of a final formulation of truth in a series of numbered chapters, sections and paragraphs, were all expressions of the desire of human nature for something which shall endure, something in which it may find stability and order and rest and peace. This impulse and desire of the individual to seek the over-individual or universal expresses itself in all the idealistic movements, whether in philosophy or in religion or in the social order. But the Medieval attempt to satisfy this desire failed, partly because it was too rigid and recognized too little that other demand of human nature for liberty of action and thought, and partly because it was too exclusively rational. To apply the old military maxim, reason has constructed nothing which reason cannot destroy. Therefore the revival of individualism and the disintegration of Medievalism was marked by extensive sceptical movements.

In looking back over this survey of scepticism in the Renaissance, we may perhaps roughly classify three kinds, directed against the church and the historical element in the Christian

religion, the traditional philosophy of the social order, and the philosophical conception of a demonstrable absolute truth. These three kinds of scepticism appear sometimes together reinforcing one another, sometimes even in conflict with one another, sometimes unrelated to one another. They appear in varying degrees, from moderate caution to outspoken defiance of authority. But they have all contributed something to modern thought.

The attack on historical Christianity was first stimulated by the new contact with the Jews and the Mohammedans in the thirteenth century. From that time on, especially in Italy, unbelief constantly increased, and in the sixteenth century spread over Europe. Deism was a reconstructive effort, intended to base essential religion more solidly on reason instead of on revelation. It had its period of success, when it served, no doubt, a useful and valuable purpose, but in its turn it succumbed later to a more thorough-going philosophical scepticism. Another extremely important aspect of this religious dissent is the surprisingly strong development of Arianism in northern Europe in the sixteenth century, a development which was forcibly suppressed by the powerful Protestant sects and has been somewhat obscured in history ever since. We can only surmise what the intellectual history of Europe would have been had there been real freedom of thought in Protestant Europe in the sixteenth century. Finally, the sectarianism of the Protestant movement, the exhaustion of fanaticism in religious and semi-religious wars, led to a recognition of the necessity of tolerance. But the new conception of tolerance owed something also, as we have seen in the case of the liberal English churchmen of the seventeenth century, to that weakening of confidence in the reason

which was one general result of Renaissance philosophical scepticism.

Perhaps the Medieval ideal of a universal empire received its final blow in the rise of national feeling at the time of the Renaissance. That subject lies outside of this thesis. But the ideal of an ethical and political order based on a universal and rational Law of Nature was widely questioned in the Renaissance. It was disregarded and contradicted in the real-politik of Machiavelli. It was directly attacked by the sceptical "libertines," who opposed to its rationalism another "nature" of impulse and appetite.

Philosophical scepticism, that is, the doubt whether reason can know the final truth, appeared in various forms throughout the period we have studied. In the Middle Ages it took the form of Nominalism in opposition to Realism. And, very significantly, this Nominalistic school showed a ready tendency towards mysticism. In the Renaissance, with the revival of Sextus Empiricus and Greek scepticism, the criticism of the methods of knowledge began anew on a new basis and with the most far-reaching results on modern thought. The general scepticism made the problem of knowledge the foremost philosophical problem in the seventeenth century, from Bacon and Descartes to Locke. But it had also a more direct influence on literature and popular thought, especially through Montaigne. For Montaigne was the great master of the sceptical naturalists of the Renaissance and seventeenth century, both in France and England. At the same time there were those who in spiritual insight went beyond him, but whose youthful experience as his disciples nevertheless profoundly influenced their religious life later. Of these were Pascal and, I believe, John Donne. Thus

we have again in the seventeenth century that approach of mysticism and scepticism which we noted in the Middle Ages; it appears not only in Donne, but in a sense also in Sir Thomas Browne and Glanvill. Glanvill and his fellows in the Royal Society were therefore continuing an earlier development when they met the full force of the dogmatic materialism of the new science by a recourse to philosophical scepticism.

Thus in the Renaissance was prepared for us that world of tolerance and doubt which we regard as peculiarly modern. The audacities of sixteenth century heresy have become the commonplaces of our speech. We have made a platitude of Tennyson's summary of the history of thought:

Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be.

We are not astonished at the paradox of a critic, who is by this dualism of his own thought an especially sympathetic critic of the seventeenth century, when he says that "insight and scepticism are the two arms, the positive and negative aspects, so to speak, of truth."¹ Not only in its philosophy and religion, but in its esthetics and poetry, this reaction against rationalism is one of the fundamental characteristics of the modern mind. The rationalism of Neo-classicism was intimately connected with that philosophical and religious rationalism which continued from the Middle Ages into the Renaissance and seventeenth century. "Rien n'est beau que le vrai," wrote Boileau.

¹More, Paul Elmer, The Drift of Romanticism, Boston(1913). p. 272.

"Aimez donc la raison: que toujours vos écrits
Empruntent d'elle seule et leur lustre et leur prix."

We are so far removed from this conception of art that we cannot even understand it justly, exactly as we consider Thomas Aquinas an antiquated and unprofitable theologian and philosopher. In the late Middle Ages it became customary to call the philosophy of Aquinas the via antiqua and the more sceptical thought of Occam the via moderna. The terms are still applicable. As the modern way to religion, according to Carlyle, lies through the "centre of indifference," so the modern way to truth lies, in a far deeper sense than the Nominalists understood, through doubt. Along that darkened path the modern world is travailing in confusion and pain.

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